

**DEFINING SPACE: HOW HISTORY SHAPED AND INFORMED NOTIONS OF
KASKA LAND USE AND OCCUPANCY**

A Thesis Submitted to the College of
Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Degree of PhD
In the Department of History
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

By

GLENN WILLIAM ICETON

PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this dissertation in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my dissertation work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis/dissertation or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my dissertation.

Requests for permission to copy or make other uses of materials in this dissertation in whole or part should be addressed to:

Head of the Department of History
Arts Building, 9 Campus Dr
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7N 5A5
Canada

OR

Dean
College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
University of Saskatchewan
116 Thorvaldson Building, 110 Science Place
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7N 5C9
Canada

ABSTRACT

Beginning in the 1970s, as the federal government began to negotiate comprehensive land claims based on extant Aboriginal title, historical understandings of Indigenous land use and occupancy gained new significance as a means of demonstrating title. As Indigenous groups – such as the Kaska Dena – tried to demonstrate their Aboriginal title, they grappled with the legacy of colonial perspectives of their land use and occupancy. These colonial perspectives had the complex and sometimes contradictory effects of supporting their claims, while simultaneously circumscribing them within a Eurocentric framework. Historical renderings of Kaska Dena land use occurred within specific historical and environmental contexts. Moreover, outsider representations of Kaska Dena land use were shaped by the particular interests of the outsider or colonial observer – be it the interests of pursuing fur trade or bringing Indigenous peoples under state administration. This dissertation examines the historical unfolding of colonial knowledge relating to Kaska Dena land use and occupancy, beginning with contact and extending to the 1970s, when the federal government agreed to negotiate outstanding Indigenous land claims. The dissertation then focuses on how these past understandings of Kaska Dena land use influenced their abilities to advance their territorial rights within the context of comprehensive land claim negotiations and the emerging regime of environmental impact assessments. This analysis also considers how the Kaska Dena mobilized community-based knowledge to sometimes support and sometimes counter colonial representations of Kaska Dena land use.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation could not have been completed without the support and assistance of a great deal of people. First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Bill Waiser, for his feedback on this project's many drafts. His comments have helped me refine my arguments and strengthen my writing style. I am also indebted to my committee members – Dr. Keith Carlson, Dr. Jim Clifford, Dr. Ken Coates – for their support through my years in the PhD program. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Liza Piper for her insightful comments on the final draft of this dissertation.

Beyond my dissertation committee, I would like to thank my graduate school colleagues who provided me with intellectual support as well as much needed levity, when necessary. Students at University of Calgary (where I completed my Master's) and at University of Saskatchewan whose support and friendship has been indispensable are: Michelle Desveaux, Dr. Jessica DeWitt, Anne Janhunen, Laura Larson, Colin Osmond, Dr. Will Pratt, Dr. Dustin McNichol, Dr. Shannon Murray, Dr. Frances Reilly, Dr. Michael Savage, Dr. Matt Todd, and Dr. Cheryl Troupe.

This project was greatly assisted by the helpful archival staff of the various institutions I visited. I would like to thank Lesley Buchan, Donna Darbyshire, Jennifer Roberts, Shannon Olson, and Wendy Sokolon from the Yukon Archives for their help navigating the collections and locating sources. I would also like to express my gratitude to Johnathan Wise and Benoit Thériault for pointing me towards valuable ethnographic materials held at the Canadian Museum of History Archives. Finally, I would like to thank Raymond Frogner for his assistance at the British Columbia Archives.

The consumption of coffee was essential to the completion of this dissertation. To this end, I would like to thank City Perks for their high octane americanos and for allowing me to occupy a table for hours on end as I wrote this dissertation.

My family was a tremendous support during all stages of the PhD program. This network of family support grew during my years in the program! I would like to thank my parents, Mark and Elaine Iceton, for their support as I completed my dissertation, and for not asking (too often) when it would be done. I would also like to thank in-laws Crystal and Calvin Brannon and Don Spinney for their support. I would also like to acknowledge the feline members of my family, Boris, Horatio, and Wilber. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Dr. Erin Spinney, for both her love and support as I went through the highs and lows of PhD life. Having already experienced the trials of edits, rewrites, and the defense, Erin has helped guide me through some of the more challenging moments of the dissertation. I couldn't imagine this dissertation coming to light without her!

DEDICATION

To Boris and Wilber. Your antics have made life a lot more exciting!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PERMISSION TO USE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: “He Had Seen a Smoak at No Great Distance”: Fur Trade Exploration Narratives and Conceptions of Kaska Land Use	50
CHAPTER TWO: “Not a Word of Indians”: The View from the Trading Post and Perceptions of the Kaska	100
CHAPTER THREE: “It was commencing to get wintery”: Ethnographic Fieldwork, Transportation, and Seasonality in the Yukon-BC Borderlands	125
CHAPTER FOUR: “In Time It Could Be Made to Grow Crops”: Narrative Understandings of Kask Land Use during the Early 20 th Century	163
CHAPTER FIVE: “Many Families of Unseen Indians”: Trapline Registration and Understandings of Kaska Land Use in the BC-Yukon Borderlands.....	196
CHAPTER SIX: “Change Cannot be Stopped but, It Can be Controlled”: Aboriginal Title, Environmental Justice, and Historical Narratives	245
CONCLUSION	295
BIBLIOGRAPHY	303

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Number	Page
0-2 Map of Study Area.....	9
0-2 Territories Claimed Under the Umbrella Final Agreement.....	10
0-3 Kaska Dena Land Claims in British Columbia.....	11
0-4 Kaska Dena Council Traditional Territory.....	12
1-1 Map from John McLeod’s 1831 Expedition.....	93
1-2 Indian Chart	97
3-1 George Dawson Map of Upper Liard Watershed	139
3-2 George Dawson Map of Upper Liard Watershed (closeup view)	140
4-1 James Teit Map Delineating Kaska and Tahltan Traditional Territories	193
5-1 Sketch Map of Trapline	208
5-2 Map identifying names and locations of bands within the Stikine Indian Agency.....	213
5-3 Map of BC-Yukon Border	223
5-4 Map of Yukon-BC-NWT Borderlands	230
5-5 St. Pierre Nande Trapline Sketch Map	235
5-6 Map of South Nahanni Traplines, 1951	237
5-7 Map of Pelly River Traplines, 1963-1972	241
6-1 Kaska Dena Council Traditional Boundaries in British Columbia.....	256
6-2 John Honigmann’s “Map of Cassiar and Its People”	257

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the 1970s the federal government agreed to negotiate comprehensive land claim agreements with the Indigenous peoples of Canada who had not signed previous treaties. With this change in the federal government's policies, the Kaska Dena found themselves reliant on colonial knowledge in order to prove their Aboriginal title. Colonial records were cited in research reports which were used to demonstrate Kaska Dena land claims. Moreover, in order to demonstrate their Aboriginal title, the Kaska Dena faced a legal double-standard. Their abilities to demonstrate their title to the land in the eyes of the Canadian legal system was contingent on presenting detailed documentary evidence of historical land use. Conversely, Crown title was presumed to exist based upon treaties made between Britain and other colonial powers. On top of this legal double-standard, the colonial records used to demonstrate title contained many limitations. This dissertation examines the production of colonial knowledge related to Kaska Dena land use and occupancy from first contact with Hudson's Bay Company traders during the early nineteenth century to efforts by state administrators to understand Indigenous land use during the early to mid-twentieth century. The dissertation then examines how colonial representations of Kaska Dena land use shaped Kaska Dena efforts to advance their Aboriginal title, beginning during the 1970s.

In 1973, the Yukon Native Brotherhood submitted *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* to the Canadian government. This document articulated the desires of the Yukon's Indigenous peoples to negotiate a comprehensive land claims agreement with the federal government. It ultimately resulted in the signing of the Umbrella Final Agreement by the federal government and the Council of Yukon Indians in 1993. The commencement of land claims process in the Yukon was part of a much broader movement in the Canadian North. It was also inspired

by events from outside Canadian borders. As the prominent northern Canadian historian William Morrison has pointed out, the late 1960s saw the emergence of a liberal zeitgeist that raised questions about the “old treaty-making process” which saw the extinguishment of Aboriginal rights and title.¹ With the rise of this new mentality, northern Canadian Indigenous peoples were in a new-found relatively powerful position to negotiate land claims with the federal government. Moreover, the successful land claim negotiations in Alaska in 1971 provided inspiration for similar settlements in the Canadian North.² The land claims process was also helped along by various institutional and public responses to plans for northern resource development. The Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry and Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry (commonly referred to as the Berger Inquiry and Lysyk Inquiry, respectively) provided Indigenous organizations with encouragement to continue advancing their claims.³

Outside of the territories, in the provincial norths, provincial governments’ desires to develop northern resources further contributed to land claim negotiations. Perhaps most famously, in Quebec – as the Quiet Revolution resulted in a desire on the part of Quebecois to achieve the goal of becoming “maîtres chez nous” – the provincial government sought to develop the hydroelectric potential of the North. The James Bay Cree were not willing to surrender their resources so easily, resulting in the eventual negotiation of the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*.⁴ However, while the wheels were set in motion towards negotiating and settling land

¹ In this dissertation, ‘Aboriginal’ is used in term of discussing the legal concept of Aboriginal rights and title. Otherwise the term ‘Indigenous’ is used.

² William R. Morrison, “The Comprehensive Claims Process in Canada’s North: New Rhetoric, Old Policies,” in *For the Purposes of Dominion: Essays in Honour of Morris Zaslow*, eds., Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison, (North York, Ontario: Captus University Publications, 1989), 261-262.

³ Kenneth Coates and Judith Powell, *The Modern North: People, Politics and the Rejection of Colonialism*, (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, Publishers, 1989), 110.

⁴ See Caroline Desbiens, *Power from the North: Territory, Identity, and the Culture of Hydroelectricity in Quebec*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013) and Hans Carlson, *Home is the Hunter: The James Bay Cree and Their Land*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

claims in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, other jurisdictions saw little progress towards arriving at a land claim agreement. Few land claims have been settled in British Columbia. This situation is particularly germane to this dissertation as the Kaska's traditional territory was bifurcated by the BC-Yukon border. The British Columbian government has a long history of suppressing Indigenous land claims, a position which the federal government – while initially opposed to this policy – eventually adopted.⁵ However, as political scientist Christopher McKee has noted, court decisions beginning in the early 1970s resulted in changes in both provincial and government policies. Moreover, they provided a firm basis on which BC's Indigenous groups could advance their claims.⁶ The *Calder* decision, which acknowledged the existence of Aboriginal title in British Columbia, even as the judges were divided over the issue of whether Aboriginal title had been extinguished, led to the creation of the Office of Native Claims. While the ensuing years saw significant opposition to land claims within the British Columbian and federal governments, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, the provincial government was beginning to warm to the idea in a way that would force the federal government's hand. In 1988, the province's Social Credit government created the Ministry of Native Affairs, while simultaneously refusing to acknowledge the existence of Aboriginal title. In 1991, the British Columbian government announced seven "Guiding Principles" for the land claims process. The change in the provincial government's position was a response to pressures from court decisions, Indigenous activism, and public opinion.⁷ Meanwhile, there were many political developments in the lead-up to the tabling of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* and many additional changes during

⁵ For a discussion on BC's approach to the concept of Aboriginal title from its period as a British colony until the late-twentieth century, see Christopher McKee, *Treaty Talks in British Columbia: Building a New Relationship*, 3rd Edition, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 3-31 and Frank Cassidy, "Aboriginal Land Claims in British Columbia," in *Aboriginal Land Claims in Canada: A Regional Perspective*, ed., Ken Coates, (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, Ltd., 1992), 11-43.

⁶ McKee, *Treaty Talks in British Columbia*, 26.

⁷ Cassidy, "Aboriginal Land Claims in British Columbia," 11-43; McKee, *Treaty Talks in British Columbia*, 29-30.

the intervening period between the Yukon Native Brotherhood's land claims submission and the ratification of the Umbrella Final Agreement (to say nothing of the events happening south of the sixtieth parallel).

The Umbrella Final Agreement provided a template by which individual First Nations would negotiate their respective land claim agreements with the government. In the following decades, eleven out of the Yukon's fourteen First Nations negotiated land claim and self government agreements. However, three Yukon First Nations – the Ross River Dena Council, the Liard First Nation, and the White River First Nation – remain without comprehensive land claim agreements. Of the three, the Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation are part of the Kaska Nation. In northern British Columbia, the Kaska Dena Council (KDC) represented the interests of the Kaska resident in BC. The KDC are also part of the Kaska Nation. As each Yukon First Nation undertook land claim negotiations under the general template of the Umbrella Final Agreement, the Kaska Nation chose to negotiate land claims as a unified nation. However, the Kaska Nation and the federal government failed to arrive at an agreement and in 2002 negotiations were broken off. The land claim talks ended when the federal government disengaged from negotiations due to litigation brought forward by the Kaska Dena Council.⁸ Because of the historical roots of Aboriginal title, these unsettled land claims have breathed new life into the significance of the history of southeastern Yukon and northeastern British Columbia – the traditional territory claimed by the Kaska. This history of Kaska land use and occupancy is of great importance in establishing the Kaska's Aboriginal rights and title. Moreover, this situation presents an opportunity to raise questions concerning the ways in which the courts have defined Aboriginal

⁸ Kaska Dena Council, "About Us: Timeline," *Kaska Dena Council*, <https://kaskadenacouncil.com/interactive-timeline/> accessed 31 October 2018.

rights and title and draws attention to the disconnect between the histories constructed by the courts and the messier ground truth.

As colonizers arrived in and travelled through Kaska Dena lands, they developed ideas about Indigenous land use and occupancy. Various factors shaped these notions. Paramount among these factors was the physical environment through which they travelled, combined with their preconceived notions regarding human-environment relations, specifically with respect to Indigenous peoples.

The two primary components of the physical environment that shaped colonizers' views of Kaska land use and occupancy was seasonality and distance. These two factors combined to dictate how people travelled through the subarctic of northern British Columbia and southeastern Yukon. Early travel through the north was generally confined to rivers and, due to the fact that rivers froze over during the winter, travel was generally limited to the summer months. These types of limitations on travel shaped the knowledge obtained by these travellers. The seasonal nature of travel limited the potential interactions between explorers and anthropologists and Indigenous peoples. Travelling during the summer also meant that would-be ethnographers (professional or otherwise) did not witness the winter land use activities. The mid-twentieth century construction of modern transportation infrastructure – particularly the construction of the Alaska Highway – changed transportation networks and mitigated some of the hardships brought on by winter. As rivers were no longer the primary source of northern transportation, anthropologists could carry out ethnographic fieldwork during the winter.

Combined with the physical environment, as colonizers arrived in the subarctic they carried with them various intellectual antecedents which shaped their understandings of how Indigenous peoples inhabited their environments. colonizers arrived in the North for specific reasons, and as

they aimed to understand Kaska Dena land use, their own interests shaped their representations. Commercial interests, the expansion of state administration, and even the desire to advocate on behalf of Indigenous land rights shaped how individuals and organizations represented the environment and Indigenous land use.

While the Kaska Dena contributed to shaping how outsiders would understand their land use and occupancy, they exercised little influence over how their culture and land use was represented to the outside world. During the 1970s, as land claims emerged as a major social, political, and cultural issue in the North, the Kaska Dena and other northern Indigenous peoples found themselves in a position where they could influence these understandings. While earlier documentation of Kaska Dena lands had previously served outsiders' interests, such as commercial expansion or the expansion of state administration, with the emergence of land claim negotiations, these past understandings gained new significance. Colonial records could then be used to advance Indigenous claims against the state. As land claims were being advanced, the Kaska Dena were also in a position where they exerted greater control over the representation of their land use than they had in the past. While colonial records were used to demonstrate extant Aboriginal title, these materials were supported, and at time refuted, by community-based knowledge. While colonial records were useful for proving Aboriginal title, the Kaska Dena refused to let their title be wholly defined by outsiders.

Even as the Kaska Dena challenged these colonial records, their abilities to demonstrate their Aboriginal title was circumscribed within a legal framework that would not recognize the complexities of Indigenous land tenure systems. Legal definitions of Aboriginal title reflected a Eurocentric concept of property which failed to recognize kinship ties that crosscut band affiliations. These simplified understandings of Indigenous land use and occupancy did not simply

emerge as a result of court decisions relating to Aboriginal title and the federal government's desire to negotiate land claims. Rather, simplified notions of Indigenous land use had been emerging throughout the twentieth century as anthropologists and state administrators developed more rigid concepts of band affiliations and traditional territories. As the Kaska Dena began to articulate their land claims to the federal government within the terms dictated by the state, these simplified renderings of land use proved useful as a means of asserting their claims.

Although individuals and organizations who tried to define Kaska Dena land use were colonizing agents, unlike much of southern Canada, it would be inappropriate to describe the process of colonizing Kaska Dena lands as settler colonialism. Many of the colonists arriving in the subarctic had no interest in settling in the area. Rather, they sought to exploit the region's resources or extend government control. The colonizing agents were not monolithic entities. Rather, they represented a myriad of interests ranging from fur harvesting, mineral resource extraction, the creation of a sport hunting industry, the conservation of furbearers, to the control of Indigenous activities. In this dissertation, the terms 'colonizer,' 'outsider,' and 'southerner' are used. These terms describe non-Kaska colonizing agents who have tried to define Kaska land use. 'Colonizer' and 'outsider' are more general terms referring to non-Indigenous individuals and groups. These individuals and groups could be state and non-state actors. Meanwhile, 'southerner' refers specifically to colonizing agents and forces emanating from southern regions in Canada and even the United States.

The Kaska

The Kaska Dena refer to their homeland as Dene Kēyeh, meaning "the people's country."⁹ The Kaska are an Athapaskan-speaking Indigenous group inhabiting southeastern Yukon and

⁹ Gillian Farnell, "The Kaska Dene: A Study of Colonialism, Trauma and Healing in Dene Kēyeh," (MA Thesis: University of British Columbia, 2014), 4.

northern British Columbia. The Kaska Nation consists of five communities or nations on both sides of the Yukon-BC border: The Ross River Dena Council, Liard First Nation, Dease River First Nation, Kwasacha Nation, and the Daylu Dena Council.¹⁰ The territories claimed by the Kaska through the comprehensive land claim processes in both the Yukon and BC include most of southeastern Yukon and northern central British Columbia, in the region between Fort Nelson to the east and Dease Lake to the west. Additionally, the Kaska Dena claim lands across the Mackenzie Mountains in the Northwest Territories. (See figures 0-1 to 0-4.) While figure 0-2 does not show the specific claim of the Kaska Dena in the Yukon (since it is a map of territory claimed through individual land claims negotiated under the Umbrella Final Agreement, under which the Kaska have not negotiated a settlement), the region in southeast Yukon not covered by any land claim agreements have been claimed by the Kaska Dena. These claims are demonstrated by map 0-3.

¹⁰ Kaska Dena Council, *Kaska Dena Council*, <https://kaskadenacouncil.com/#> accessed 31 October 2018.

Figure 0-1: Map of Study Area (Google Earth)

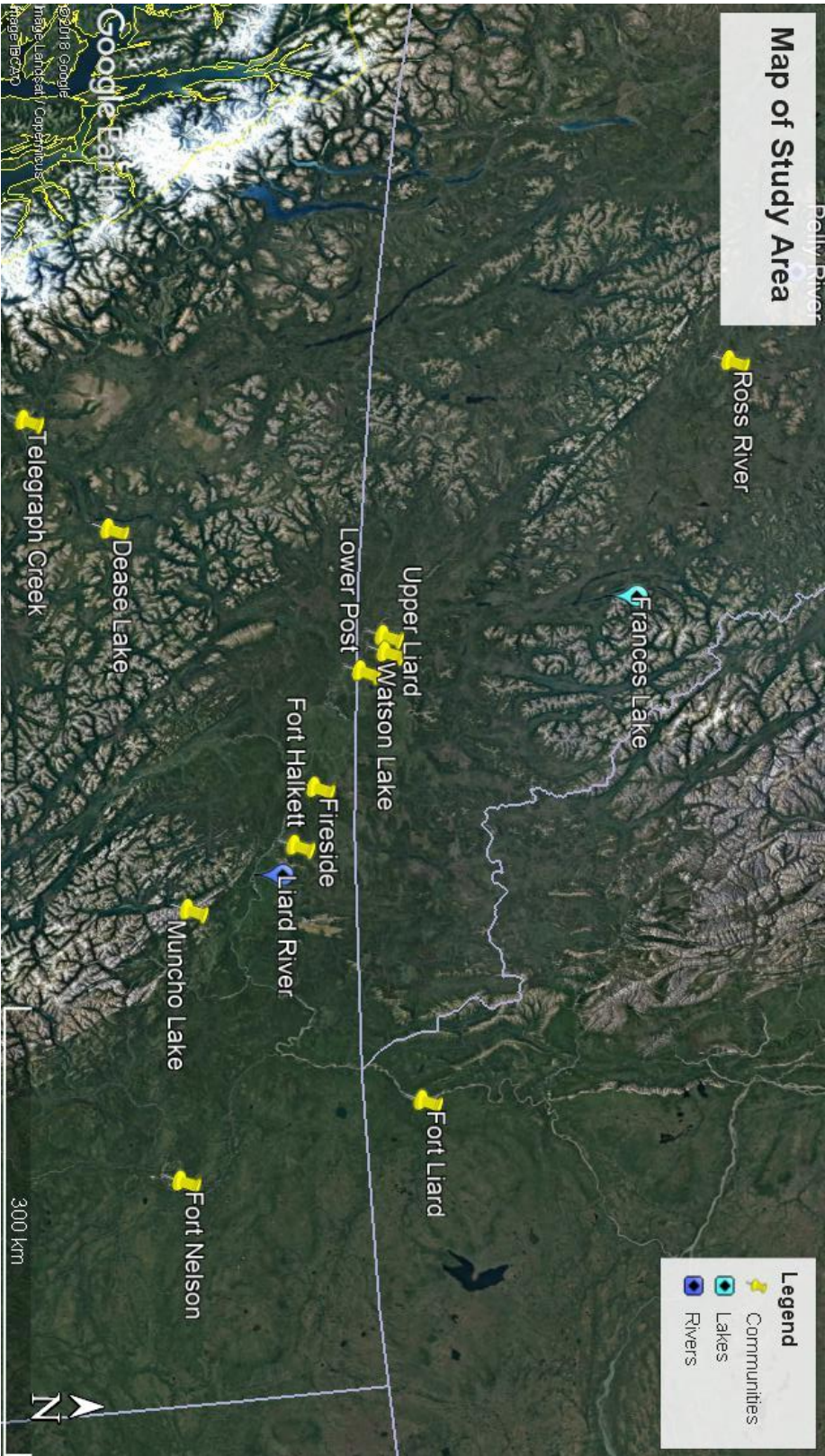
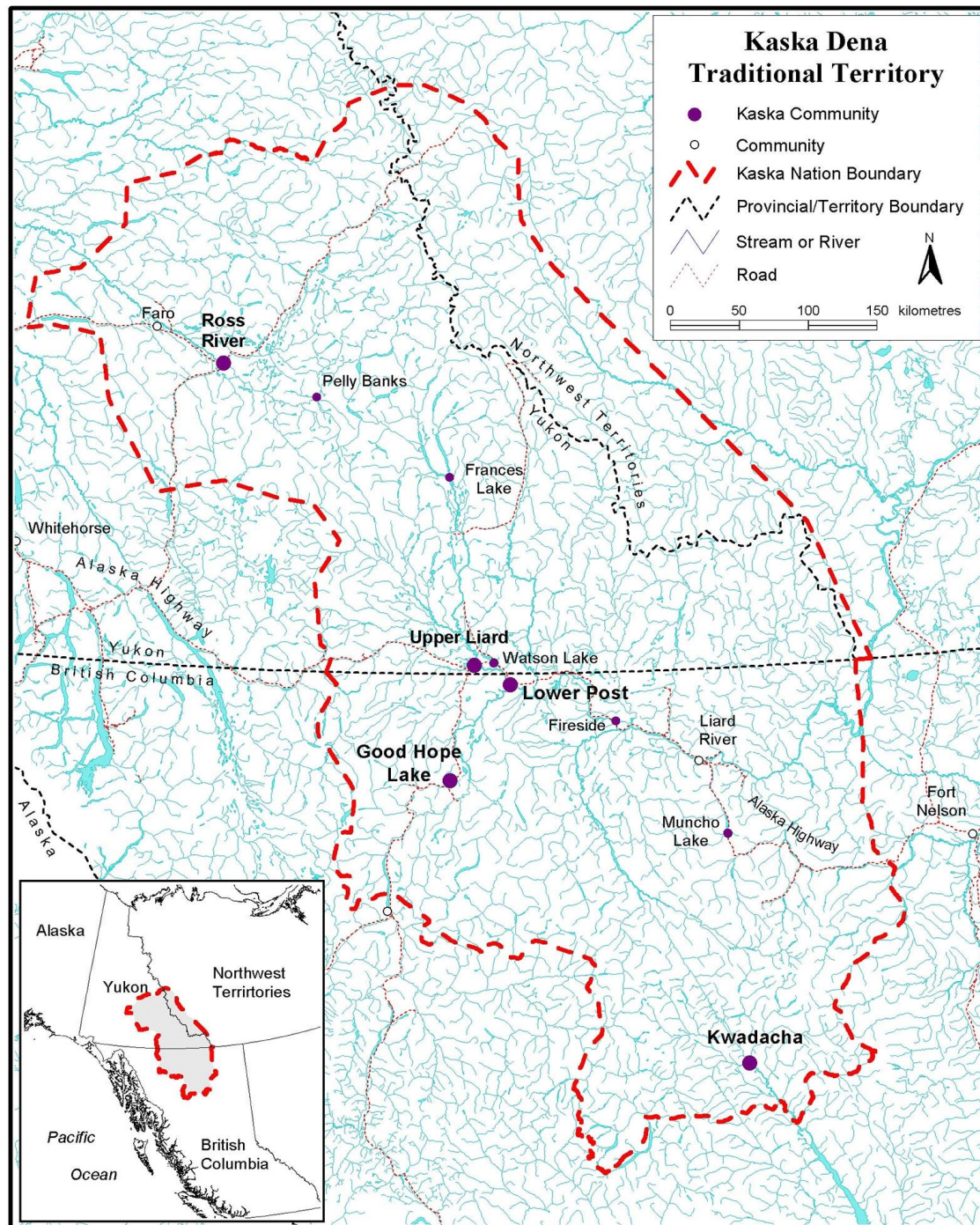
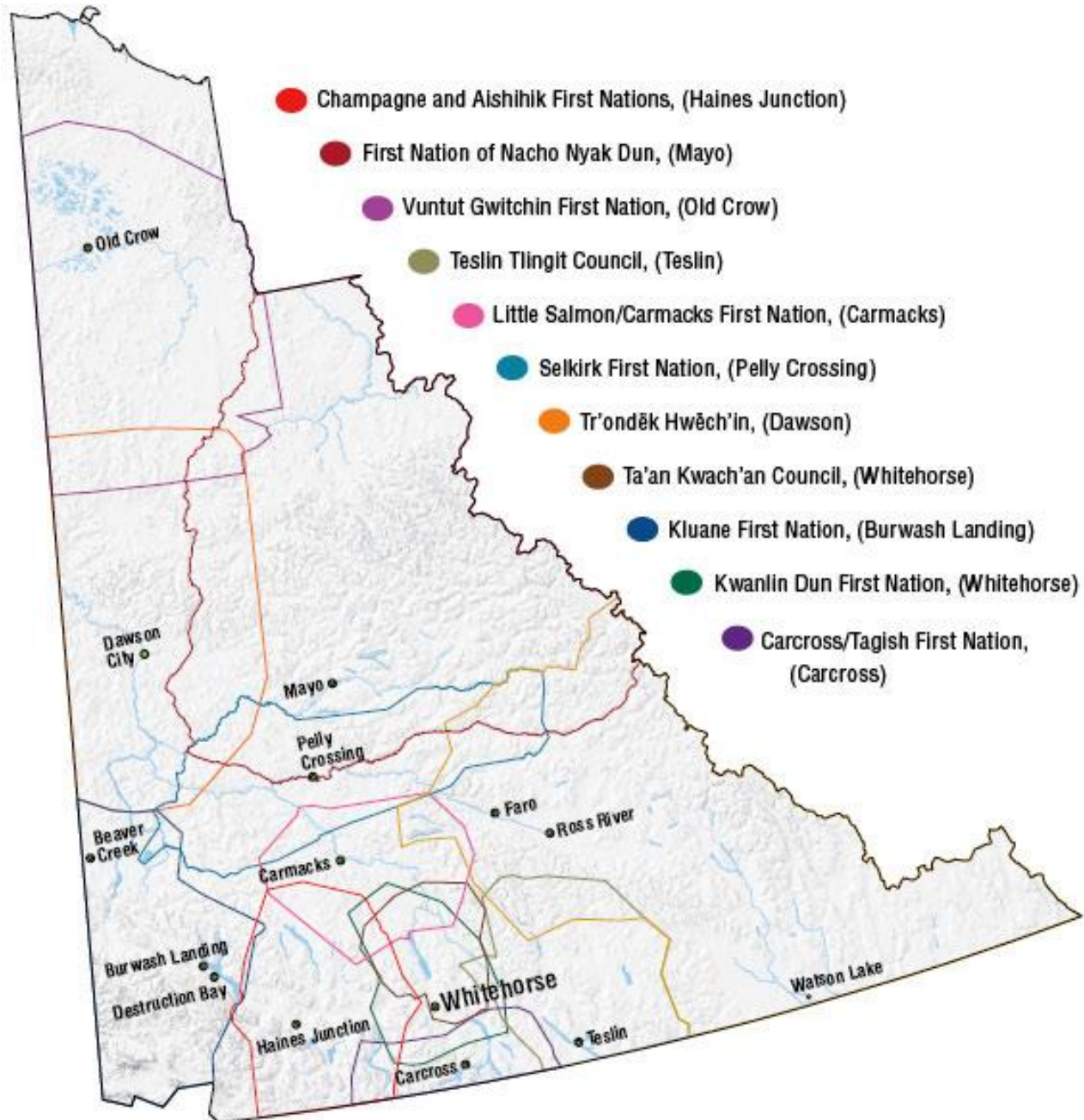


Figure 0-2: Kaska Dena Council Traditional Territory¹¹



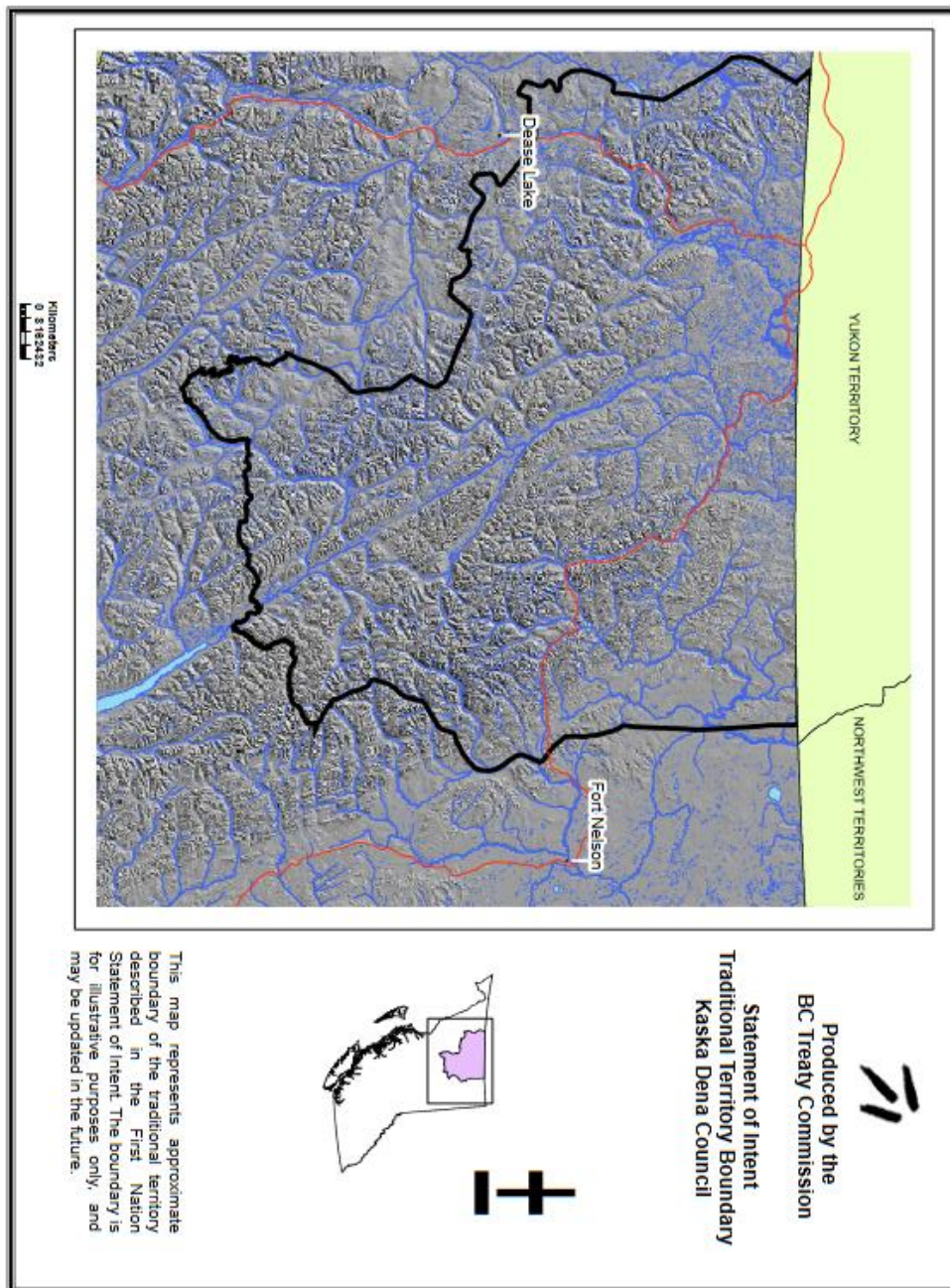
¹¹ Kaska Dena Council, "Our Land," *Kaska Dena Council*, <https://kaskadenacouncil.com/our-land/> accessed 31 October 2018.

Figure 0-3: Territories Claimed Under the Umbrella Final Agreement¹²



¹² Canada, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, *Building the Future: Yukon First Nation Self-Government*, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1316214942825/1316215019710> accessed 31 October 2018.

Figure 0-4: Kaska Dena Land Claims in British Columbia¹³



¹³ BC Treaty Commission, "Statement of Intent: Traditional Boundary Map: Kaska Dena Council," *BC Treaty Commission*, http://www.bctreaty.ca/sites/default/files/Kaska_Dena_Council_SOI_Map.pdf accessed 31 October 2018.

Historians have paid little attention to the Kaska. While fur trade histories have discussed regions claimed by the Kaska as traditional territories, these have generally shed little light on Kaska society, to say nothing of land use and occupancy. In *Fur Trade and Exploration*, historian Theodore Karamanski provided a simple narrative of exploration through the Liard River basin.¹⁴ Additionally, northern historian Ken Coates has examined the fur trade dynamics in what is now the Yukon Territory.¹⁵ However, there have been few works pertaining to the fur trade that have addressed Indigenous land use and the related issue of ethnogenesis in the Liard region. For example, in 1974, ethnohistorian Frans Anton Lamers wrote a Master's thesis that argued that the Kaska were not "aboriginal" but the result of early contact with Europeans.¹⁶ Ethnohistorian J.C. Yerbury, in his article "The Nahanny Indians and the Fur Trade," identified the "Nahanny" resident in the southeastern-most corner of the Yukon and adjacent areas in British Columbia and the Northwest Territories during the proto-contact period as Kaska. Due to the broad application of the term "Nahanny," the ethnographic affiliations of the Indigenous peoples who inhabited this region during the early fur trade and their relationship with current band affiliations was unclear. Yerbury used Hudson's Bay Company records to try to elucidate the Nahanny's relationships with other Athapaskan groups in the area, arriving at the conclusion that they were most intimately related to the other Kaska groups. Moreover, he argued that they had developed a balance between their population levels and the capacity of the local resources which was disturbed by the influx of

¹⁴ Theodore J. Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration: Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983). From pages 87 to 160, Karamanski discusses the exploration of the Liard and Stikine River watersheds. Meanwhile, from pages 236 to 274, he describes the exploration of the France River and Pelly River watersheds and the establishment of Fort Selkirk at the confluence of the Yukon and Pelly Rivers.

¹⁵ Ken Coates, "Furs Along the Yukon: Hudson's Bay Company-Native Trade in the Yukon River Basin, 1840-1893," *BC Studies* 55 (Autumn 1982): 50-78.

¹⁶ Frans Anton Lamers, "Are the Kaska and Slave Aboriginal? An Ecological and Ethnohistorical Study," MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University, December 1974.

other Indigenous groups – such as the Slave and Chipewyan. Yerbury suggests that the arrival of new Indigenous peoples into the region resulted in reports of starvation.¹⁷ Significantly, this article was published at a time when the Kaska Dena Council were beginning to articulate their land claim interests to the federal government.¹⁸

Following his earlier work on the fur trade, Coates provided a history of Native-newcomer relations in the Yukon Territory.¹⁹ While this study provides crucial insights into the social and economic interactions between the Yukon's Indigenous peoples and Euro-Canadian society, it does not provide an analysis of the dynamics of Kaska land use and occupancy, as well as the ethnogenesis of various Kaska bands (although the study is not without its insights on these matters).²⁰

Other studies, such as consultant Martin Weinstein's *Just Like People Get Lost* are more myopic in scope. Weinstein examined the impact of the controversial Cyprus-Anvil mine on the Ross River Dena. Due to the scope of the study, its geographical focus is limited to the region surrounding the mine.²¹ Similarly, Peter Petrov Dimitrov's Master's thesis in community and regional planning focused specifically on Ross River Dena land use activities before and after the opening of the Cyprus-Anvil Mine.²² In her 1978 study of the Cyprus-Anvil Mine, consultant Janet

¹⁷ J.C. Yerbury, "The Nahanny Indians and the Fur Trade: 1800-1840," *The Musk-Ox* 28 (1981): 43-57.

¹⁸ Kaska Dena Council, *Kaska Dena Council's Land Claim Submission*, (Watson Lake: Kaska Dena Council, February 1982).

¹⁹ Ken S. Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

²⁰ For example, in *Best Left as Indians*, 234, Coates discusses the amalgamation of various Kaska bands and the subsequent tensions between these respective groups which had a detrimental effect on band affairs.

²¹ Martin S. Weinstein, *Just Like People Get Lost: A Retrospective Assessment of the Impacts of the Faro Mining Development the Land Use of the Ross River Indian People*, (Ross River: A Report to the Ross River Dena Council, 1992).

²² Peter Petrov Dimitrov, "A Northern Indian Band's Mode of Production and its Articulation with the Multinational Mode," (Msc. Thesis, University of British Columbia, October 1984).

Macpherson also discussed the various social and ecological impacts that the mine had on Ross River's Indigenous community.²³

Few anthropologists have focused on the Kaska. In 1954, anthropologist John Joseph Honigmann published an ethnographic reconstruction of the Kaska. However, while Honigmann has addressed historical change among the Kaska, this topic is given relatively little attention.²⁴ More recently, much of the ethnohistorical work focusing on the Kaska has been produced by linguistic anthropologist Patrick Moore. These works have included articles concerning Kaska naming systems and the use of narratives.²⁵ In his dissertation, "Point of View in Kaska Historical

²³ Janet E. Macpherson, "The Cyprus Anvil Mine," in *Northern Transitions*, Vol. I, *Northern Resource and Land Use Policy Study*, (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, 1978), 111-149. Among the issues discussed are the violent encounters between the Indigenous and White community members (130) as well as the granting of staking permits on lands where the Kaska trapped (132).

²⁴ John Joseph Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: An Ethnographic Reconstruction*, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 51, (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1954).

²⁵ In "Negotiated Identities: The Evolution of Dene Tha and Kaska Personal Naming Systems," *Anthropological Linguistics* 49, no. 3/4 (Fall-Winter 2007): 283-307, Patrick Moore compares the evolution of the Kaska and Dene Tha naming systems, rooting them in their respective cultural practices as well as how they were shaped by both internal and external factors. In this article, Moore noted that the Dene Tha – who had more sustained contact with Catholic missionaries – were given more formal Euro-Canadian names while the Kaska – who had less contact with missionaries but more contact with miners – were given simple names which then became surnames. Through comparing the evolution of naming systems, Moore argued that one can ascertain how each group was integrated into wider cultural areas. With respect to the Kaska, he suggested that the language shift was more rapid than that of the Dene Tha, which in turn affected naming practices. Meanwhile, in "Poking Fun: Humour and Power in Kaska Contact Narratives," in *Myth & Memory: Stories of Indigenous-European Contact*, ed., John Sutton Lutz, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 69-89, Moore analyses humorous and non-humorous narratives as different genres of Kaska narratives. He argues that in the humorous narratives, Euro-Americans and Euro-Canadians are presented as bossy while Indigenous peoples are presented as timid. Effectively, these narratives draw on stereotypes of each group and parodies the relationships between them. Moreover, Moore suggests that these stories highlight historical and contemporary power imbalances between the two groups. Contrasting humorous and non-humorous narratives, Moore states that the differences between the two are due to their different purposes. The former pertains to general inequality between Euro-Canadian and Indigenous societies while the later refers to specific incidents. Additionally, unlike the non-humorous narratives, the humorous narratives have meanings beyond the actual narrated event. Moore also noted the existence of intertextuality in humorous narratives: "The humorous Kaska genre employs intertextuality to make amusing references to other sorts of discourse. Moving between genres also prompts the listener to consider an account at something other than face value. When the genre of the story itself is ambiguous, this serves to alert the listener that nothing should be taken for granted. In addition, intertextuality is a form of innovation that is used by narrators to maintain humorous appeal" (84). Moore also noted that intertextuality provides an opportunity for the Kaska to respond to Euro-Canadian literature about them (87). Moore provided the following astute statement that "[f]urther understanding of the types of oral narratives and of the relations between them will contribute to a more sophisticated use of these sources as historical evidence, and to a comprehension of how they are used in the communities in which they are performed" (89). Finally, in "The Contemporary Significance of Native Language Texts: Arthur John, Sr.'s Account of John Martin and the Kaska Stick Gamblers," in *Transforming Ethnohistories: Narrative, Meaning, and Community*, ed., Sebastian Felix Braun, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 113-146, Moore discusses

Narratives,” Moore sought to situate Kaska cultural values within historical context.²⁶ Meanwhile, Moore’s Masters student Gilliam Farnell has produced a thesis examining the connection between colonial trauma and how it has affected the contemporary relationship between the Kaska and Dene Kēyeh (the Kaska term for their homeland meaning “The people’s country”).²⁷ Farnell argued that colonization created a generation of Kaska who are removed from their traditional practices. Moreover, she argues that the landscape today is contested through hegemonic discourses which champion the need to exploit natural resources: “The Kaska Dene have been increasingly disenfranchised from their cultural and physical landscape as a result of these ideological clashes arising from concepts of both ecological governments and also neoliberal ideologies about the need to develop and exploit the resources in our natural environment.”²⁸ She concluded that “[t]he colonial narratives that position Dene Kēyeh as either an unoccupied wilderness or otherwise as a region in need of development should and can be contested.”²⁹ While a valuable study – particularly for its use of Kaska oral narratives – historical processes are treated superficially, likely due to the brevity of the thesis. Finally, in *Trail of Story, Traveller’s Path*, anthropologist Lesley Main Johnson has provided an ethnoecology of the Kaska and other Indigenous groups of the Canadian northwest. Beginning with the premise that ecological knowledge is encoded in language and that an understanding of the land varied from landscape to

the use of linguistic directionals to cast the Gwich’in Anglican missionary John Martin (who had attempted to suppress stick gambling among the Kaska) as an outsider to the Kaska. In his analysis of the narrative, Moore noted the connection that Arthur John Sr. made between the arrival of the Gwich’in missionary among the Kaska and earlier raids that had been launched by the Gwich’in against the Kaska, noting that Martin was viewed by them as a “medicine man.” An additional work pertaining to the Kaska written by a linguistic anthropologist is Barbara A. Meek, *We Are Our Language: An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athapaskan Community*, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2010). However, this book is focused on contemporary language revitalization and contains little in the way of historical analysis.

²⁶ Patrick James Moore, “Point of View in Kaska Historical Narratives,” (PhD. Dissertation, Indiana University, December 2002).

²⁷ Farnell, “The Kaska Dene,” 1-2 and 4.

²⁸ Farnell, “The Kaska Dene,” 5.

²⁹ Farnell, “The Kaska Dene,” 40.

landscape, Johnson sought to elucidate the process of coming to “know” the land.³⁰ With trails as a metaphor throughout the work, Johnson demonstrated that Indigenous peoples experience the land as trails rather than polygons (i.e., areal space). Moreover, she noted that knowing the land involves an active engagement with the land.³¹ While noting the Kaska’s changing relationship to land resulting from recent developments,³² Johnson offers little in the way of historical analysis. Meanwhile, political scientist Christopher Alcantara has studied Kaska land claim negotiations in relation to other land claim negotiations. Alcantara’s study sought to understand the conditions that resulted in successful and unsuccessful negotiations.³³ This dissertation provides a more thorough analysis of the historical processes which shaped perceptions of Kaska land use and then discusses the implications of these historical understandings for Kaska land rights. While various studies have analysed Kaska land use, they have generally been parochial in focus, both geographically and temporally.

Historiography

This project draws from three thematic historiographical streams: environmental history, ethnohistory, and legal history. Within the field of environmental history, as it relates to Indigenous peoples, there has been a strong focus on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples’ lands as it was appropriated by European settlers. This trend in environmental history began to flourish following the early 1980s with the publication of seminal works such as Richard White’s *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change* and William Cronon’s *Changes in the Land*. Both works demonstrated a detailed consideration of Indigenous land use patterns, as well as the eventual

³⁰ Leslie Main Johnson, *Trail of Story, Traveller’s Path: Reflections on Ethnoecology and Landscape*, (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010), 3-5.

³¹ Johnson, *Trail of Story, Traveller’s Path*, 203 and 206.

³² Johnson, *Trail of Story, Traveller’s Path*, 107.

³³ Christopher Alcantara, *Negotiating the Deal: Comprehensive Land Claims Agreements in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

dispossession of their lands as they were supplanted through the superimposition of European land use regimes.³⁴ They added a social-cultural dynamic to the biological approach to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples as expressed in Alfred Crosby's *The Columbian Exchange*.³⁵ However, each of these books reflect the displacement of an Indigenous North America in the temperate zone by a European agricultural regime (replacing both pre-existing hunting and gathering as well as agricultural regimes). Since the publication of Crosby's seminal book, various scholars have applied the concept of ecological imperialism to regions beyond the temperate zone.³⁶ Ecological imperialism refers to the role that the exchange of 'Old World' and 'New World' biota filled in the advancement of imperialism. This process included the spread of Old World plants, animals, and pathogens in place of their Indigenous counterparts. Ecological imperialism resulted in the displacement of Indigenous peoples and the creation of what Crosby referred to as 'Neo-Europes.'³⁷

As northern Canadian environmental history has developed, the role of agriculture as a factor leading to the dispossession of Indigenous lands has been minimal. Instead, northern

³⁴ In *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980), Richard White examines environmental change through the use of technology and the introduction of new biotic species to Island County. In framing this study, White contrasted Salish social, cultural, and economic thought to that of Euro-Americans, noting the latter's bias toward agriculture. Through this narrative, White discussed the fluidity of Salish culture as they incorporated newly introduced crops into their own gathering practices. Nevertheless, the Salish were largely dispossessed of their traditional territories and confined to reserves. Meanwhile, in *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), William Cronon built upon the ideas developed by Richard White as he wrote an ecological history of New England. He argued that "the shift from Indian to European dominance in New England entailed important changes—well known to historians—in the ways these people organized their lives, but it also involved fundamental reorganizations—in the ways these people organized their lives, but it also involved fundamental reorganizations—less well known to historians—in the region's plant and animal communities" (xv). Thus, Cronon examined the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their environments by analysing the changing modes of production.

³⁵ Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1972).

³⁶ For example, Elinor G.K. Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) applied this concept to the tropical environment. Meanwhile, Liza Piper and John Sandlos, "A Broken Frontier: Ecological Imperialism in the Canadian North," *Environmental History* 12, no. 4 (October 2007): 759-795, apply this concept to the northern Canadian environment.

³⁷ Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Canadian environmental historians have explored other ways in which the land and its resources have been contested. To this end, there has been a strong focus on resource exploitation and wildlife conservation and preservation. One early example of this approach to history is environmental historian Robert McCandless's *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History*. McCandless examined the development of wildlife use and management in the Yukon during the first half of the twentieth century. He noted how changing communications technology and the imposition of southern influences affected northern approaches to wildlife management.³⁸ However, a more explicit example of wildlife conservation and preservation has been provided by environmental historian John Sandlos, who argued that state wildlife preservation and conservation initiatives in the Northwest Territories worked to supplant Indigenous approaches to wildlife harvesting. Sandlos built upon the works of previous environmental historians, such as Karl Jacoby, providing a critique of conservationist and preservationist initiatives and their impacts on local populations, knowledge, and resource use.³⁹ Additionally, environmental historians and historical geographers such as Kathryn Morse, Liza Piper, Arn Keeling, and John Sandlos have examined mining in the Canadian North. To varying degrees each of these works discuss the impacts of the mining industry on Indigenous peoples.⁴⁰ However, it is Keeling and Sandlos who have most explicitly examined

³⁸ Robert G. McCandless, *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History*, (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1985).

³⁹ John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margins: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves and the Hidden History of Conservation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁴⁰ In *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), Kathryn Morse applies a metropolitanist approach to the Klondike gold rush, largely focusing on the American experience during the gold rush, the metropolitanist expansion of the south, and the interaction between industrial labour and the environment. Morse is somewhat weak in her analysis of the effects of the gold rush on the resident Han population. For example, while she briefly mentions the incompatibility between the Klondike River system's biological production and the miners' imposition of gold production upon the river network as well as the extant Han fisheries (113), there is little said with respect to the dispossession of the region's Indigenous peoples. Morse's strongest analysis with respect to the effects of the Klondike gold rush on the Han focuses on the provisioning activities that they took up in response to the new demand for meat resulting from the influx of miners. She argues that this process resulted in alterations to Han culture by changing the reasons why they hunted. One of the most fundamental changes was the commodification of fish and game as the Han sought to acquire Euro-American foodstuffs in exchange for meat and fish (154-164). Morse interprets this process through the lens of a declensionist

the impact of mining on Indigenous populations through uniting political ecology and environmental justice in what they referred to as “historical political ecology.” As the authors noted, “historical political ecology integrates environmental histories of biophysical change with an analysis of the ideological and economic dimensions of resource distribution.”⁴¹ With this methodological framework in mind, Sandlos and Keeling drew comparisons between the Canadian North and the developing world, suggesting that both were resource frontiers. The two authors applied this theoretical framework to the Pine Point Mine in the Northwest Territories, suggesting that the Dene experienced negative environmental impacts from the mine while receiving few benefits, such as employment, from its establishment. Moreover, they linked the Pine Point Mine to the state’s broader goals of colonizing the North.⁴²

narrative: “As miners’ tables grew richer and their health improved, the Indians’ tables and their health grew poorer” (162). However, Morse does not adequately connect ecological changes to the region, the commodification of wildlife resources, and Indigenous dispossession. Meanwhile, in *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), Liza Piper examined industrial mining and fishing in the Large Lakes of the Canadian northwest. In the book she problematized the often accepted notion that industrialization has weakened the connection between humans and their environment. Rather, she contended that industrialization simply changed the human-environment relationship: “industrialization ... changed the cognitive and material links between our work and nature’s work but did not separate one from the other” (4). In terms of local impacts of industrial development, Piper noted that industrial waste remained in the Canadian northwest while the products of the natural environment were exported (286-288). With respect to the impacts of subarctic industrialization, Piper discussed the confrontation between “outside” and Indigenous perception or knowledge: “In this meeting, scientific knowledge and authority, as extensions of industrial capitalist desire, prevailed, and the industrial transformation ultimately carried the imprint of how scientists especially and to a lesser extent other outside interests ... imagined the natural world” (8). An example of this confrontation between local and scientific views is provided in Piper’s discussion pertaining to overfishing and the concomitant problem of depleted fish stocks, noting that federal scientists, who were intimately connected with commercial fisheries, had the power to define the level of exploitation (218-223). In both “Environmental Justice Goes Underground? Historical Notes from Canada’s Northern Mining Frontier,” *Environmental Justice* 2, no. 3 (2009): 117-125 and “Claiming the New North: Development and Colonialism at the Pine Point Mine, Northwest Territories, Canada,” *Environmental History* 18 (2012): 5-34, Arn Keeling and John Sandlos point toward new methodologies to understanding northern resource development and its impact on Indigenous communities. This issue is discussed in greater detail in the main body of this introduction. Finally, in “Aboriginal Communities, Traditional Knowledge, and the Environmental Legacies of Extractive Development in Canada,” *The Extractive Industries and Society* 3, no. 2 (April 2016): 278-287, John Sandlos and Arn Keeling discuss the superficial use of Traditional Knowledge in the remediation process at Giant Mine, NWT. In this article, they build upon the works of other scholars who have analysed the ways in which Traditional Knowledge has been circumscribed (such as Paul Nadasdy) and demonstrate how Yellowknives Dene knowledge was “contained” to “local ecological knowledge” while the remediation process was seen to be strictly a technical and scientific matter. Moreover, they argue that the technical nature of the remediation process excluded the historical injustices that Traditional Knowledge sought to bring to the fore.

⁴¹ Keeling and Sandlos, “Environmental Justice Goes Underground,” 122.

⁴² Keeling and Sandlos, “Environmental Justice Goes Underground,” 123-124; Sandlos and Keeling, “Claiming the New North,” 9-10. While Sandlos and Keeling are correct in acknowledging the similarities between the Canadian

Related to northern mining history – albeit in a less direct way – is environmental historian Emilie Cameron’s *Far Off Metal River*. In this work, Cameron highlighted the importance of the Bloody Falls massacre witnessed by the Hudson’s Bay Company explorer Samuel Hearne in 1771. Cameron analysed how the narrative relating to the story shaped the ways in which non-Indigenous Canadian society related to the North. Conveying the importance of Hearne’s narrative, Cameron wrote: “Stories, I argue, are not separate from, nor merely representative of, the world around us; they are themselves material, and they have material effects on the lives we live.”⁴³ Elaborating upon this concept, she argued that non-Indigenous stories about the North, such as Hearne’s, continually legitimized the dispossession of Indigenous peoples.⁴⁴ More specific to mining history, Cameron has included a chapter which analyses how the Bloody Falls massacre narrative served to lay bare the Inuit relationship with copper (and thus open to mining in the North) and ultimately marginalized the Inuit from the resulting mining operations.⁴⁵ In her concluding comments regarding stories about the Inuit and copper and how they shape the Inuit’s relationship with contemporary mineral development in the Arctic, Cameron wrote:

Copper has been central to living and dying in the North; as Qoerhuk recounted to Métayer, the relations between copper, snow, ice, and Inuit were at one time integral to survival. The point is not to revive the use of copper snow knives; Inuit survive differently today. It is, instead, to ask whether the copper stories promised in contemporary mineral development will be good stories, stories that will foster life

North and the broader global resource frontier, they fail to acknowledge the limitations of this comparison. For example, Todd Gordon and Jeffery R. Webber, “Imperialism and Resistance: Canadian Mining Companies in Latin America,” *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2008): 63-87, have discussed how David Harvey’s concept of Accumulation By Dispossession served to simultaneously dispossess Indigenous peoples of their land while simultaneously incorporating them into the mines’ labour force. However, as Sandlos and Keeling, “Claiming the New North” demonstrates, Indigenous peoples received few employment opportunities at Pine Point mine in the Northwest Territories (22-32). This was similarly pointed out in Macpherson, “The Cyprus Anvil Mine,” 115, where she pointed out the failure to incorporate Indigenous labour into the mining activities. Additionally, it should be noted that the state had a different (perhaps more complex) relationship with the Indigenous peoples in northern Canada than it did with the Indigenous peoples of developing nations.

⁴³ Emilie Cameron, *Far Off Metal River: Inuit Lands, Settler Stories, and the Making of the Contemporary Arctic*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 12.

⁴⁴ Cameron, *Far Off Metal River*, 40.

⁴⁵ Cameron, *Far Off Metal River*, 84-110.

and, if so, *whose* life, and where? It is to insist, in other words, on tracing the broader relations through which life is made in and through the North today. Regardless of whether mining enables Nunavummiut to sustain “good lives” and to continue caring for their lands, connecting Arctic copper to global markets will surely sustain the lives of Qablunaat [white people]. It will buoy our stock exchanges, grow our pensions, power our homes, transmit our e-mail. We do not emphasize these relations, but they are there to be found in our most iconic northern stories.⁴⁶

In these concluding remarks, Cameron drew attention to how copper stories relating to the Inuit obscured who would truly benefit from mineral resource development in the Arctic.

Each of these works have discussed the dispossession of Indigenous peoples relating to contestations over the land and its resources. However, with few exceptions, what has largely remained unexamined are the efforts on the part of Indigenous peoples to repossess their lands either through the land claims process or proving the existence of Aboriginal rights and title. It should be noted, however, that some relatively recent works in environmental history have examined various ways in which Indigenous peoples have taken actions to assert their rights to use and manage the land and its resources. Two such works focusing on Indigenous land use in northern Canada have been published in *A Century of Parks Canada*, edited by environmental historian Claire Campbell. In “Kluane National Park Reserve, 1923-1974: Modernity and Pluralism,” former Parks Canada historian David Neufeld examined how modernist ideological approaches to the management of the park struggled to come to terms with Indigenous environmental values.⁴⁷ A more explicit demonstration of Indigenous reappropriation of land and

⁴⁶ Camerin, *Far Off Metal River*, 110.

⁴⁷ David Neufeld, “Kluane National Park Reserve, 1923-1974: Modernity and Pluralism,” in *A Century of Parks Canada: 1911-2011*, ed., Claire Elizabeth Campbell, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011), 235-272. In this chapter, Neufeld addressed the issue of whether Western modernist thought can address cultural plurality and adequately incorporate Athapaskan interests into the management of Kluane National Park. He suggested that in order to do so, it is necessary to abandon the dichotomy between preservation and development. Neufeld demonstrates that the creation of Kluane National Park in 1976 was created not along the modernist lines that it was originally envisioned, but was shaped through diplomatic and cultural relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous society. This was a result of the recently commenced land claim negotiations which resulted in a strengthening of Indigenous voices and perspectives in the Yukon. Neufeld summed up the significance of this development with the following

resources was shown by environmental historian Brad Martin in “Negotiating a Partnership of Interests: Inuvialuit Land Claims and the Establishment of Northern Yukon (Ivvavik) National Park.” In this chapter, Martin analysed the interaction between park creation and the settlement of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement in 1984. To this end, Martin demonstrated that engagement with state structures could be a source of empowerment for Indigenous peoples as the Inuvialuit negotiated harvesting rights in the Northern Yukon (Ivvavik) National Park.⁴⁸ While Martin has provided an important nuance to understanding the interaction between Indigenous peoples and the state, he left unexamined the ways in which engagement with the state served to shape the discourse around traditional land use. Finally, in *Home is the Hunter* environmental historian Hans Carlson examined the ways in which the James Bay Cree asserted their sovereignty over their traditional territory through the use of historical narratives. As the Cree used historical narratives to advance their land claims, Carlson also told the story (or narrative) of the integration of James Bay into the North American economy, thus challenging but not supplanting local energy flows by directing hydroelectric energy southward.⁴⁹ Commenting on the effects of treaties around Indigenous people’s narratives pertaining to their land, Carlson stated that the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA)* allowed the Cree to gain political control while simultaneously losing their ability to define their region through narrative. As land claims were settled and Cree rights codified, they “lost a great deal of their historical ability to define the lands

statement: “The opening of a cross-cultural dialogue through negotiated agreements such as those of Kluane offers a chance to think in new ways about our country” (264).

⁴⁸ Brad Martin, “Negotiating a Partnership of Interests: Inuvialuit Land Claims and the Establishment of Northern Yukon (Ivvavik) National Park,” in *A Century of Parks Canada: 1911-2011*, ed., Claire Elizabeth Campbell, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011), 273-301.

⁴⁹ Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*. Similarly, in *Power from the North*, historical geographer Caroline Desbiens examines the interacting cultures of hydroelectric development between the Quebecois and Cree during the first phase of hydroelectric development in the James Bay region. Desbiens contextualizes the hydroelectric development within the emergent Quebecois nationalism which followed the Quiet Revolution in Quebec. In this respect, Desbiens posited that economic development must be understood through a cultural lens, one which sought to establish the Quebecois’ aboriginality to the James Bay region while simultaneously positioning it as a *terra nullius*.

of the region within their own narrative.”⁵⁰ This dissertation considers how unsettled land claims and extant Aboriginal rights and title provide opportunities to understand continued efforts on the part of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to define Indigenous lands.

Various works within the fields of ethnohistory and anthropology have examined Indigenous perceptions of place. Perhaps the most influential of these works has been Keith Basso’s *Wisdom Sits in Places*. Basso noted that the Apache sense of place was both a result of collective local knowledge as well as the individual possession of knowledge.⁵¹ Thomas Thornton has elaborated upon Basso’s insights in *Being and Place Among the Tlingit*. Thornton identified four cultural elements which were fundamental to Indigenous constructions of place: social organization, language, material production, and ritual processes. Additionally, he noted that space, time, and experience contributed to the definition of place.⁵² An additional crucial insight from ethnohistory has been provided by Keith Thor Carlson in *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*. Carlson demonstrated the interplay between structure and event in Stó:lō society and history and shed light on the multivalent identities that exist among groups that are at one moment homogenous and at another moment fractured.⁵³ Finally, in *Making Native Space*, Cole Harris examines the interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples from a spatial perspective by considering the drawing of the line between Native and non-Native space. Harris has provided “a historical narrative of geographical change” to show how Indian reserves came to be in British Columbia. Harris examines the colonizers’ justifications for appropriating Indigenous

⁵⁰ Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 22.

⁵¹ Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

⁵² Thomas F. Thornton, *Being and Place Among the Tlingit*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

⁵³ Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

lands – such as the concept of *terra nullius*.⁵⁴ The insights provided by these works contribute to a greater understanding of changing conceptions of place and how these shifting ideas interact with changing band identities. These complexities are crucial to understanding the complex nuances of Indigenous participation in land claims negotiations.

Legal scholars have tended to raise questions regarding the burdens of proof imposed on First Nations in order to prove both their existence as a nation as well as their extant Aboriginal rights and title. These questions have resulted in innovative works concerning the intersection between anthropology and Canadian (and British) law. Many of these works, however, do not sufficiently interrogate the Eurocentric underpinnings of the British-Canadian legal system, as well as the divergence between historical narratives provided by the legal system (with respect to the assertion of Crown sovereignty) and the more convoluted ground truth. In *Common Law Aboriginal Title*, legal scholar Kent McNeil analysed the development of the concept of Aboriginal title from its deep roots in England. McNeil consciously confined his study to legal aspects, stating that “[t]he morality of the colonization process, the justice of applying English law in this context, and related ethical issues are generally not discussed. The question he sought to answer is not whether the Crown should have respected indigenous occupation, but whether it was under a legal obligation to do so.”⁵⁵ McNeil advocated the application of common law principles to the question of Aboriginal title, which would view Indigenous lands as fee simple property.⁵⁶

In the article “Challenging Assumptions,” published in *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada* Professor of Law Catherine Bell and Anthropologist Michael Asch demonstrated that legal precedent resulted in the perpetuation of antiquated anthropological theories in the courts.

⁵⁴ Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), xviii-xxii.

⁵⁵ Kent McNeil, *Common Law Aboriginal Title*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 5.

⁵⁶ McNeil, *Common Law Aboriginal Title*, 304-305.

Bell and Asch argued that the Canadian courts rely on past precedent which had been built on anthropological theories that are now considered out-of-date. They argued that judges – rather than needing proof that Indigenous groups were sufficiently organized to hold title over the land – should assume that all people lived in an organized society.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, in “The Meaning of Aboriginal Title,” published in the same volume, legal scholar Kent McNeil questioned the legitimacy of limiting the rights practiced by Indigenous peoples over their title lands to practices extant during the assertion of Crown sovereignty.⁵⁸ While McNeil is correct in his observation that Canadian legal institutions need to accommodate changes in Indigenous societies and management of their natural resources, the ways in which Aboriginal title is defined and the ways in which Indigenous peoples assert their title remains unchallenged. Meanwhile, in *Let Right be Done*, edited by Hamar Foster, Heather Raven, and Jeremy Webber, various contributors placed the *Calder* decision (which resulted in the recognition of Aboriginal title) in its historical context. This volume included historical analysis of the lead-up to the *Calder* decision (including prior attempts by the Nisga’a to force the federal and British Columbian governments to recognize their title to their traditional territory), as well as the ways in which subsequent court decisions have further shaped the definition of Aboriginal title.⁵⁹ Historian Bruce W. Hodgins has argued in his contribution to a volume entitled *The Culture of Hunting in Canada*, that Canada’s Indigenous people have the legal right to hunt. He based this conclusion on a strict reading of legal precedents, as well as the historical fact that Indigenous peoples across Canada participated in hunting activities. Moreover, he conceded that not all Indigenous societies had the right to sell animals

⁵⁷ Catherine Bell and Michael Asch, “Challenging Assumptions: The Impact of Precedent in Aboriginal Rights Litigation,” in *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equality, and Respect for Difference*, ed., Michael Asch, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 38-74.

⁵⁸ Kent McNeil, “The Meaning of Aboriginal Title,” in *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equality, and Respect for Difference*, ed., Michael Asch, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 135-154.

⁵⁹ Hamar Foster, Heather Raven, and Jeremy Webber, eds., *Let Right be Done: Aboriginal Title, the Calder Case, and the Future of Indigenous Rights*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

harvested during their hunting activities. Hodgins's conclusion was based on his observation that not all Indigenous groups had traditionally participated in the trade of wildlife products.⁶⁰ In this work, Hodgins based his analysis on a strict reading of Euro-Canadian law without questioning the legal basis on which these rights are derived. Additionally, he did not challenge the concept of 'traditional' or what might be considered a traditional activity. In *The Archive of Place*, environmental historian William Turkel briefly discussed Tsilhqot'in land use and occupancy within the context of debates surrounding their Aboriginal rights and title. However, Turkel's discussion on Aboriginal law is limited. While he considered the role of archaeology in shaping concepts of land use and occupancy, the role of oral history was not examined.⁶¹ Finally, legal historian Douglas C. Harris has examined the role of the British Columbia Court of Appeal (BCCA) in defining Aboriginal and treaty rights, suggesting that during the 1970s, the BCCA generally ruled that these rights had little bearing on the province of British Columbia. For example, in the *Calder* case, the BCCA ruled that Aboriginal title did not exist in British Columbia. The ruling reflected the status quo in the province regarding the denial of Aboriginal title. This pattern changed after the *Constitution Act* of 1982, when the court took a more active role in strengthening Aboriginal and treaty rights. Harris then suggested that during the 1990s the court was divided on the issue.⁶²

Other legal scholars, such as John Borrows, have suggested that Indigenous legal tradition has a place within Canada's broader legal system. This argument was advanced in *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*, in which Borrows argued that Canada had a pluralistic legal system

⁶⁰ Bruce W. Hodgins, "Aboriginal Peoples and Their Historic Right to Hunt: A Reasonable Symbiotic Relationship," in *The Culture of Hunting in Canada*, eds., Jean L. Manore and Dale G. Miner, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 193-204.

⁶¹ William J. Turkel, *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 52-62.

⁶² Douglas C. Harris, "A Court Between: Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in the British Columbia Court of Appeal," *BC Studies* 162 (Summer 2009): 137-164.

which could (and should, based on Section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*) accommodate Indigenous legal traditions.⁶³ However, Burrows naïvely ignores the power dynamics at play in shaping the ways in which Indigenous legal traditions would interact with the broader legal system. To this end, Borrows and the various scholars discussed above would do well to consider the hegemonic processes at play in shaping Aboriginal law. Within these hegemonic processes, British legal institutions are privileged above Indigenous customs relating to land use. The hegemony of Aboriginal law is somewhat dealt with in the article written by Bell and Asch which discussed the perpetuation of outdated anthropological theories by judges citing previous cases. In “‘Property’ and Aboriginal Land Claims in the Canadian Subarctic: Some Theoretical Considerations,” anthropologist Paul Nadasdy discussed hegemony as it relates to Aboriginal law and the negotiation of Indigenous land claims. He posited that within the context of land claims, Canada’s subarctic Indigenous peoples were forced to discuss land ownership in ways that were inappropriate to their culture. Nadasdy argued that using the language of “property” was a hegemonic form of discourse that was foreign to the ancestors of the Kluane First Nation.⁶⁴ Nadasdy’s insights into the hegemonic nature of the land claims process is important for future research and needs to be explored from a historical perspective. Notions of ‘property’ were not simply imposed upon Indigenous peoples at the onset of comprehensive land claim negotiations. Rather, these ideas took shape over many years as government administrators sought to delineate Indigenous peoples into specific bands with their respective hunting and trapping territories. Contributing to this process, anthropologists endeavoured to draw boundaries around the ‘traditional territories’ of Indigenous peoples.

⁶³ John Borrows, *Canada’s Indigenous Constitution*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

⁶⁴ Paul Nadasdy, “‘Property’ and Aboriginal Land Claims in the Canadian Subarctic: Some Theoretical Considerations,” *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 104, no. 1 (March 2002): 247-261.

There are a handful of works which have drawn from the subfields of environmental history, ethnohistory, and legal studies. An early effort to combine the historical aspects of Indigenous culture and local ecologies with more contemporary concerns pertaining to Aboriginal rights and title was provided by historical geographer Arthur Ray in the article “Fur Trade History and the Gitksan-Wet’suwet’en Comprehensive Claim.” Ray examined the history of Indigenous land tenure in the Hudson’s Bay Company records and then described his own experiences testifying in court as an expert witness. Ray concluded that Chief Justice Allan McEachern had a narrow view of Indigenous occupancy and activities. Ray saw a complex land tenure system that pre-dated the arrival of the European fur trade and involved the trade in pelts between different Indigenous groups (i.e., trapping for commerce). While McEachern acknowledged the existence of these complex land tenure systems, he denied the existence of inter-regional trade prior to the arrival of European traders. McEachern consequently limited Aboriginal rights to subsistence pursuits. The judge’s misunderstanding of Indigenous culture resulted in his limiting of Gitksan and Wet’suset’en rights.⁶⁵

During the past decade there has been a flourishing of works combining these three sub-disciplines of history, namely environmental history, ethnohistory, and legal history. In *Native Peoples and Water Rights*, environmental historian Kenichi Matsui analysed the historical dynamics of Indigenous water rights in arid regions in British Columbia and Alberta. Similar to the article written by Bell and Asch, Matsui noted the reification of antiquated concepts of Indigenous peoples as lawyers and judges attempted to interpret anthropological and historical texts. Matsui posited that Indigenous cultures interacted with Euro-Canadian legal institutions

⁶⁵ Arthur J. Ray, “Fur Trade History and the Gitksan-Wet’suset’en Comprehensive Claim: Men of Property and the Exercise of Title,” in *Aboriginal Resource Use in Canada: Historical and Legal Aspects*, eds., Kerry Abel and Jean Friesen, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1991), 301-315.

forming a hybridized pattern of water use. Additionally, one of the strengths of *Native Peoples and Water Rights* is the contextualization of colonial legal institutions within British culture, noting the legal institution's roots in private property.⁶⁶ In *Landing Native Fisheries*, Douglas Harris examined reserve creation and Indigenous fishing rights in British Columbia. Similar to Matsui, Harris considered the imposition of Eurocentric notions of property rights on Indigenous societies, as land – including reserves – was recast as private property while fisheries were viewed as common property. The notion of common property as it related to fisheries hindered the protection of Indigenous access to fisheries. Additionally, Harris noted that Euro-Canadian conceptualizations of British Columbia's Indigenous peoples as fishing people was used to justify the creation of small reserves.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, environmental historian Jocelyn Thorpe examined the naturalization of wilderness and exclusion of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai from Temagami. This study included an analysis of the challenges they face in the courts while attempting to assert their claims.⁶⁸ Finally, in "Protecting Indian Lands by Defining Indian," environmental historian Ted Binnema has examined the controversial topic of defining who was an 'Indian.' In this article he has argued against the idea that the definition of Indian – which emerged during the years of 1850 to 1876 and resulted in the patrilineal descent of Indian status – was not an imposition of Eurocentric ideas on Indigenous communities. Rather, he contended that this definition was arrived at through consultation with the Indigenous groups of Upper and Lower Canada. Moreover, he argued that the term Indian was defined in order to protect Indigenous lands from others who

⁶⁶ Kenichi Matsui, *Native Peoples and Water Rights: Irrigation, Dams, and the Law in Western Canada*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2009); Bell and Asch, "Challenging Assumptions," 38-74. One of the strengths of *Native Peoples and Water Rights* is Matsui's contextualization of colonial legal institutions within British and Canadian culture. However, Matsui did not provide the same level of cultural context for the ways in which Indigenous peoples conceptualized their own water rights.

⁶⁷ Douglas C. Harris, *Landing Native Fisheries: Indian Reserves & Fishing Rights in British Columbia, 1849-1925*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

⁶⁸ Jocelyn Thorpe, *Temagami's Tangled Wild: Race, Gender, and the Making of Canada's Nature*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).

might claim to be ‘Indian.’⁶⁹ While Binnema has provided a convincing argument for a relatively consultative process in central Canada, he does not address the application or imposition of this central Canadian-derived definition to other regions of Canada where such a definition is inappropriate. Nevertheless, he has provided an important warning not to assume that governmental policies should not *a priori* be assumed to be Eurocentric impositions in these communities.

This dissertation expands the historiography as it relates to environmental history, ethnohistory, and legal history. This study goes beyond the simple narrative of the dispossession of Indigenous lands, to consider how knowledge about Indigenous land use took shape. In examining knowledge production, this study analyses the environmental and geographic factors which shaped colonizers’ perceptions of the territory that they passed through and the Indigenous peoples inhabiting the region. Moreover, this dissertation critiques anthropological and state knowledge as they produced more rigid conceptions of band affiliations. Finally, this study analyses the role of Canadian legal institutions and federal policies concerning land claims in distilling more complex Indigenous land tenure systems. In connection with these contemporary definitions of Aboriginal title, this dissertation connects these simplifications to processes underway earlier in the twentieth century, particularly as Indigenous peoples, such as the Kaska Dena, were being brought under state administration.

Methodology

Due to their unsettled land claims, the Kaska Nation is caught up in a legal absurdity based on the biases of Canada’s legal system. The Canadian legal system and definitions of Aboriginal title, in turn, shapes the ways in which Kaska history is understood by the courts and the federal

⁶⁹ Ted Binnema, “Protecting Indian Lands by Defining Indian: 1850-76,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 5-39.

government. Under the current legal framework, the Kaska need to demonstrate Aboriginal rights and title by providing evidence of land use to the exclusion of any other group at the time of the assertion of crown sovereignty (Aboriginal title) and that certain practices were integral to their culture at the date of first contact with Europeans during the early nineteenth century (Aboriginal rights).⁷⁰ With respect to Aboriginal title, however, there is a clear double standard in the degree to which sovereignty or title must be both demonstrated and exercised by European powers or Indigenous ethnicities, respectively. For example, as demonstrated in the case of British Columbia, British – and subsequently Canadian – sovereignty did not hang on the establishment of order over a specific region, or even settlement of the region for that matter. Rather, the 1846 *Oregon Boundary Treaty* which established the border with the United States to resolve the dispute over the Oregon territory has been determined by the Canadian courts to sufficiently assert British sovereignty over *all* of British Columbia regardless of whether or not a respective region was controlled by Britain.⁷¹ However, with respect to British and Canadian legal concepts of Aboriginal sovereignty and the concomitant Aboriginal title, there is a much greater burden of proof that the region was occupied by a specific Indigenous group. There is also a more rigorous criteria for demonstrating that the group controlled the land. Consequently, Indigenous groups that have not settled land claims, such as the Kaska, need to demonstrate occupancy of a region to the exclusion of any other group and demonstrate that they are a cohesive entity. Therefore, Aboriginal title is more geographically focused and specific than British sovereignty.

⁷⁰ Thomas Isaac, *Aboriginal Law: Commentary, Cases and Materials*, Third Edition, (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd., 2004), 19 and 410.

⁷¹ Louis A. Knafla, “‘This Is Our Land’: Aboriginal Title in Customary and Common Law in Comparative Contexts,” in *Aboriginal Title and Indigenous Peoples: Canada, Australia, and New Zealand*, eds., Louis A. Knafla and Haijo Westra, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 7.

With the imposition of this legal absurdity, the Kaska and other Indigenous groups who have yet to resolve questions of their Aboriginal rights and title have been forced to participate in British legal traditions or institutions which, in turn, shapes the discourse around traditional land use and ethnogenesis. Not only do Indigenous peoples need to demonstrate traditional land use and occupancy in a way recognized by Canadian law and show sufficient cohesion to be recognized as a “nation” by Euro-Canadians, but oral histories must also be presented in ways that render it cognizant to the courts.⁷² Thus, while the recognition of Aboriginal rights and title may be seen as a progressive development by the courts, Canadian legal traditions are in and of themselves hegemonic. Indigenous peoples are forced to assert their claims through a common discursive framework in which the terms are largely dictated by the dominant power.

Canadian legal traditions served the purpose of simplifying Aboriginal title to a form that could be easily understood by the state. In this process, Indigenous land use and occupancy and band affiliation were to be rendered legible to the state. Thus, this work considers the argument advanced in anthropologist and political scientist James Scott’s *Seeing Like a State* in its assessment of ways in which the legal framework of Aboriginal rights and title shapes understandings of Kaska land use and occupancy as well as band affiliations.⁷³ However, in considering these simplifications of Kaska land use and occupancy, it is important to recognize that the state was not monolithic. The Kaska reside in a region which is bifurcated by the Yukon-British Columbian border. Consequently, the governmental organizations with an interest in the region and associated interest in defining the land as it related to future resource development consisted of a territorial government, provincial government, and the federal government. Each of

⁷² For a more thorough discussion on the use of oral histories in the courts, see Bruce Granville Miller, *Oral History on Trial: Recognizing Aboriginal Narratives in the Courts*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

⁷³ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

these governments had unique views of and hopes for the region. Moreover, the Yukon and British Columbian governments – being a territorial and provincial government, respectively – had different, constitutionally entrenched, relationships to the federal government. Interdepartmental relations must be considered when trying to elucidate state-produced knowledge of the region. It is also important to recognize that these simplifications served industries, which were also participants in constructing notions of place. For example, while the Yukon Government implemented the registration of traplines throughout the territory, they depended to a certain extent on the knowledge of various traders to understand trapping activities in certain areas. As governments sought to settle land claims following the *Calder* decision, thus extinguishing Aboriginal title and rendering the remaining Aboriginal rights legible to the state in the form of comprehensive land claim agreements, it should be noted that the resource extraction industries partly motivated this development.⁷⁴

As Turkel has indicated in *The Archive of Place*, there was an interpretive division of labour as people sought to elucidate material traces of the past. Different disciplinary specialists interpret different traces of the material past. To use Turkel's example, a zoogeographer will interpret different evidence than a paleobotanist will. He also noted that there were interactions between these divisions of labour. These interactions would then create a clearer picture of the region's

⁷⁴ As Coates and Powell have argued in *The Modern North*, "When the resource boom finally hit in the 1960s, forcing Dene, Inuit and Metis off their lands, and when intrusive government policies started to radically alter aboriginal life, the Native people responded. In the Paulette case of 1973, the Dene sought an injunction against future developments unless a land-claims deal was negotiated. Mr. Justice Morrow of the Supreme Court of the NWT conducted extensive community hearings throughout the Mackenzie Valley, listening carefully to the words of Native elders. He subsequently agreed that certain aboriginal rights still existed in the area, and issued a land freeze on 400,000 square miles of land within the boundaries of Treaty 8 and Treaty 11" (109). In *Reconciliation: First Nations Treaty Making in British Columbia*, (Vancouver/Toronto/Berkeley: Douglas & McIntyre, 2006), 252, former Yukon Premier Tony Penikett has described the importance of certainty with respect of economic and natural resource development with respect to land claims in British Columbia. Finally, in *Negotiating the Deal*, 81, Christopher Alcantara suggests that one of the motivations behind land claims in the Yukon was the federal government's desire to develop the Yukon's natural resources.

past.⁷⁵ Thus, when considering representations of Kaska land use and occupancy, the diverse disciplinary backgrounds of those producing the representations, how their backgrounds shaped their perceptions of the environment, and how they interacted with each other will be taken into consideration. For example, an Indian Affairs agent and a game warden would likely view similar circumstances differently. By recognizing these interpretive divisions of labour alongside competing governmental jurisdictions and interactions between public and private sectors, a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of state simplifications can be ascertained. It should also be noted that Aboriginal rights and title are a continuation of state simplifications that commenced for the Kaska during the early twentieth century as the federal government sought to bring them under state management.

The current legal framework consequently shapes the ways in which both Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples talk about land use and occupancy. However, the courts are not the only venue in which assertions of Kaska land use have been presented. Environmental assessments have also been used to construct Kaska history and land use. However, contemporary understandings of Indigenous land use and connections to specific places are mediated through various historical contexts in which knowledge has been built.

This research project will build upon Turkel's *The Archive of Place* which examines the construction of the meaning and significance of place through the lens of the present. Turkel had suggested that stories of the past characterize the present, providing visions used to advance an agenda. According to Turkel, the land is inscribed with "indexical signs," each of which "signifies something else by virtue of a causal or physical relationship between the two."⁷⁶ Additionally, he

⁷⁵ Turkel, *The Archive of Place*, 5-6.

⁷⁶ Turkel, *The Archive of Place*, 66.

noted that these indexical signs require interpreters in order to elucidate a place's history.⁷⁷ With respect to land use and occupancy, it might be added to Turkel's observations that textual and oral materials represent indexical signs affiliated with place. Similar to the scientific interpretation of physical indexical signs, the indexical signs contained in discourse also require interpretation. In conjunction with Turkel's approach to understanding how present interests influence the interpretation of the past, this study analyses the role of narrative in shaping perceptions around the histories of land use and the histories of place.

This analysis will take into consideration the works of environmental historians William Cronon and Hans Carlson, respectively. As noted above, Carlson examined narratives of the James Bay region as the Cree sought to assert their sovereignty over the region. Noting that words bind individuals to the land, he argued that Cree words were being adapted to new needs. Elaborating on this concept, Carlson suggested that the Cree past needs to connect with the Cree present and that the present Cree discourse was part of a continuing negotiation with white culture. Finally, Carlson suggested that while historical narratives were being deployed in order to assert Cree sovereignty over the land, it is important not to conflate Cree politics and Cree culture.⁷⁸ However, in the situation faced by the Kaska where Aboriginal rights and title must be proven, it might be argued that through the use of narratives pertaining to land use and occupancy and specific culturally significant sites leads to the politicization of certain components of Kaska culture.

In considering the ways in which historical narratives are used within the context of Aboriginal rights and title, it is important to consider William Cronon's analysis of narratives in "A Place for Stories." In this seminal article, Cronon observed the important role of scene setting

⁷⁷ Turkel, *The Archive of Place*, 66-67.

⁷⁸ Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*.

in shaping the narrative arc.⁷⁹ To this end, in evaluating the narratives deployed in making assessments of Kaska land use and occupancy, is important to bear in mind the importance of the dates of first contact and assertion of sovereignty respectively as they relate to Aboriginal rights and title. In addition to the ways in which legal definitions of Aboriginal rights and title shaped how narratives around land were framed, various individuals also approached the Kaska's traditional territory with various preconceptions which – in turn – shaped their narrative of the region and their perception of Kaska land use. Finally, this study considers environmental historian Tina Loo's insights into the ways in which changing scales of analysis can influence understandings of resource development and quests of environmental justice.⁸⁰ This approach is particularly useful for analysing the discourse contained in various environmental impact assessments.

Statements about traditional land use and occupancy have been made by people outside of the Kaska Nation for various purposes and in various contexts in order to put forward their own “present” notion of Aboriginal traditions. These have been made throughout the history of European-Kaska contact—from Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) employees and explorers to government agents and various ethnographers. Each of these groups and individuals producing statements of Kaska land use and occupancy did so with specific purposes. For example, while HBC employees produced this information through the lens of their own commercial interests, governmental officials produced information with the purpose of bringing Indigenous peoples under state control. Additionally, ethnographers – such as James A. Teit and John J. Honigmann

⁷⁹ William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (March 1992): 1347-1376.

⁸⁰ Tina Loo, “Disturbing the Peace: Environmental Change and the Scales of Justice on a Northern River,” *Environmental History* 12, no. 4 (October 2007): 895-919.

– have analysed Kaska culture with various theoretical frameworks in mind. Thus it is important to understand the broader anthropological context in which these anthropologists worked.

The Kaska have also been engaged in the process of defining their own land use and occupancy. As land claims negotiations gathered momentum and even after negotiations halted, they made numerous assertions regarding traditional land use and occupancy through publications, news releases, submissions for environmental impact assessments, and numerous published oral histories. These materials provided an alternative version of history and insights into Kaska culture. But the process of defining land use and occupancy is not politically neutral and sometimes results in claims that conflict with those of other Indigenous groups. In evaluating published oral histories, there are a few theoretical approaches to be taken into consideration. As anthropologist Julie Cruikshank has demonstrated in both *Life Lived Like a Story* and *Do Glaciers Listen*, oral narratives reflect the specific context in which they are told. Thus, narratives become recast as they are told in different contexts.⁸¹ Expanding on anthropologist Cruikshank's theoretical developments, literary critic Susan Gingell has examined the commitment of oral traditions to text, arguing that the textual versions of oral narratives reflect the concerns extant at the period in which it was committed to writing.⁸² Finally, linguistic anthropologist Patrick Moore, who has worked specifically with Kaska narratives, has identified different genres of Kaska narratives which reflect different meanings.⁸³ Finally with respect to oral histories, Cruikshank has noted that oral histories

⁸¹ Julie Cruikshank, in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990); Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

⁸² Susan Gingell, "The Social Lives of Sedan and Sky Woman: Print Textualization from Inuit and Mohawk Oral Traditions," in *Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines*, eds. Keith Thor Carlson, Kristina Fagan, and Natalia Khanenko-Friesen, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 110-150.

⁸³ See for example, Moore, "Poking Fun," 69-89 and Moore, "The Contemporary Significance of Native Language Texts," 113-146, which were discussed above. These theoretical developments will be useful in evaluating published oral histories, such as *Dene Gudeji* as well as anthropologist James Teit's "Kaska Tales." Patrick Moore, ed., *Dene Gudeji: Kaska Narratives*, (Whitehorse, Yukon: Kaska Tribal Council, 1999); James A. Teit, "Kaska Tales," *Journal of American Folklore* 30, no. 118 (1917): 427-473.

pertaining to place bear greater resemblance to European narratives than other narratives. According to the anthropologist, narratives tied to a locale are more positivistic in nature.⁸⁴ This idea has been similarly argued by anthropologist Thomas Thornton in *Being and Place Among the Tlingit*, who – building on Keith Basso – suggested that places become “mnemonic pegs.” Thornton argued that landscape was making history and “hold[ing] it in place.”⁸⁵ These insights are considered in this analysis of oral histories and other ethnographic renderings of Kaska traditional knowledge. However, it should also be noted that when considering published ethnographic materials – such as the aforementioned published oral narratives – it is also important to compare the published sources with the ethnographers’ field notes taking into account the context of the contemporary ethnographic paradigm which could, in turn, affect the editorial decisions which shaped the published materials.

While the politics of land use and occupancy has played out, the Kaska have seen various changes to the region’s ecology. As industrial development has taken off, there has been a shift in the region’s environmental economy towards mining and oil and gas development. Aboriginal rights with respect to these emerging activities are unclear.⁸⁶ Additionally, for a variety of reasons, the various bands that comprise the Kaska Nation have merged and diverged, meaning that the current ethnographic affiliations today do not necessarily relate to the affiliations that existed when fur traders initially encountered these groups in the early nineteenth century. Because Aboriginal law tends to hold a relatively static view of Indigenous culture, as demonstrated by McNeil, Indigenous societies face limitations concerning their Aboriginal rights to natural resources.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like a Story*, 347.

⁸⁵ Thornton, *Being and Place among the Tlingit*, 17.

⁸⁶ In McNeil, “The Meaning of Aboriginal Title,” 135-154, it was argued that Aboriginal rights on title land should not be limited to pre-colonial uses as this would lead to assimilation.

⁸⁷ McNeil, “The Meaning of Aboriginal Title,” 135-154.

Moreover, it is important to understand how Aboriginal law confronts the fluid nature of Indigenous society and culture. This study builds upon the work done by anthropologist Paul Nadasdy in his dissection of the term “Traditional Ecological Knowledge” (which, he demonstrates, locks Indigenous knowledge in the past) as well as historian Paige Raibmon’s critique of the construction of authenticity around Indigenous cultures.⁸⁸ Additionally, this dissertation will consider the work of anthropologist Jean-Loup Amselle in assessing the ways in which government administrators and anthropologists contribute to the construction of culture. Amselle has suggested that ethnographers and state administrators have overstructured Indigenous cultures, reifying boundaries between various tribal and band affiliations. Moreover, he argued that these constructions have been appropriated and perpetuated by Indigenous peoples in order to advance their own claims to the land. He referred to this process as the feedback phenomenon.⁸⁹ To this end, this study examines the ways in which the anthropological and state simplifications of Indigenous society, culture, and land use have been appropriated by the Kaska and mobilized in support of demonstrating Aboriginal rights and title as well as in confronting resource development in their claimed traditional territories through various environmental review processes.

Finally, the dissertation considers the seasonal nature of the production of ethnographic knowledge and concomitant perceptions of Kaska land use and occupancy.⁹⁰ Through the

⁸⁸ Paul Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 114-146; Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth Century Northwest Coast*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁸⁹ Jean-Loup Amselle, *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere*, trans., Claudia Royal, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, originally published in 1990), 159-161.

⁹⁰ In “Winter and the Shaping of Northern History: Reflections from the Canadian North,” in *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History*, eds., Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates, (Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 2001), 23-35, Ken S. Coates and William R. Morrison contended that winter was a primary factor in shaping history and societies in the Canadian North. My analysis elaborates on the importance of winter in northern Canadian history by considering the importance of seasonality in general.

nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, European and Euro-Canadian explorers, sport hunters, and anthropologists ventured into the Kaska's traditional territories and reported on the locations of various camps and indigenous peoples they encountered. However, from John McLeod's early explorations of the Liard River in 1831 and 1834 to George Dawson's 1887 expedition up the Frances River and down the Pelly River under the auspices of the Geological Survey of Canada to Warburton Pike's and Charles Sheldon's hunting expeditions in 1892-1893 and 1905 to anthropologist James Teit's ethnographic fieldwork in 1912 and 1915 respectively, these travels took place in the summer months. As a result, they have produced a myopic picture of land use and occupancy and, in some cases, failed to make contact with various bands, resulting in an incomplete record of land use in the region. The knowledge produced from these various forays into the Canadian subarctic was a product of the interaction between the northern environment, transportation technology, and transportation routes. Changing technology from steam- or human-powered river travel to highway travel altered transportation routes and reduced winter's annual moratorium on travel. These concomitant shifts, in addition to ushering in other social, cultural, and economic changes in the North, altered the contact between Euro-Canadian society and the Kaska and the knowledge produced about the Kaska.

Various sources used in this dissertation are encumbered with certain restrictions on their use. For example, while access to the John Joseph Honigmann papers held at the National Anthropological Archives in Suitland, Maryland do not have access restrictions, there are restrictions on use. In order to protect the privacy of individuals referred to in Honigmann's field notes, researchers are not permitted to publish their names. Consequently pseudonyms are used in reference to individuals and in cases when it can be avoided, no name is attributed to a source of information.

Another set of records that contain restrictions are the Fish and Wildlife Branch records held at the British Columbia Archives in Victoria, British Columbia. Within this set of records are correspondences and maps pertaining to the registration of traplines. These sources are particularly valuable to this dissertation as evidence of land use (or, at least, as evidence of land use as the British Columbian government perceived it). However, while similar records are unrestricted within the records of the Yukon Government (held at the Yukon Archives in Whitehorse, Yukon) and Indian Affairs (held at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, Ontario), many – but not all – of the trapline records at the British Columbia Archives have access restrictions. Consequently, research agreements have been entered into with the British Columbia Archives. While permission has been given to access these records, individuals' names (with the exception of government officials) are not used in this study.

Sources

This study makes use of a wide variety of sources, such as the Hudson's Bay Company records held in Winnipeg, Manitoba. These records will provide accounts of the initial direct contact between the Kaska and European societies and the first European conceptualizations of Kaska land use and occupancy. Meanwhile, at the Yukon Archives in Whitehorse, Yukon government and private records have been consulted. Notable within the government records held at the Yukon Archives are trapline registration maps and associated correspondences.

Additionally, this dissertation is based on records at the British Columbia Archives, which provide insights into governmental efforts in northern British Columbia to understand Kaska traditional land use and occupancy in their efforts to administer the affairs of Indigenous peoples. These include the Fish and Wildlife Branch records discussed above in the methodology section.

Moreover, the British Columbia Archives have additional records that shed light on anthropological endeavours in northern British Columbia.

At Library and Archives Canada there are numerous useful records, including records by fur traders Ferdinand Willard Wentzel and Robert Campbell, the records of George Dawson of the Geological Survey of Canada, and, of course, the records of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. While the records of Wetzel and Campbell effectively supplement the records held at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, the Indian and Northern Affairs records supplement the trapline-related records held at the Yukon Archives and British Columbia Archives, respectively. Moreover, George Dawson's records shed some light on the growth of ethnology in northern British Columbia and the Yukon.

Additional records relating to Dawson's explorations are held at the McGill University Archives in Montreal, Quebec. Meanwhile, the records of anthropologists James Teit and John Honigmann are held at the Canadian Museum of History (Gatineau, Quebec) and the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (Suitland, Maryland), respectively. In addition to James Teit's field notes, the Canadian Museum of History holds a collection of correspondences between Teit and Edward Sapir, who was in charge of the Ethnography Division of the Canadian Department of Mines while Teit was carrying out his fieldwork in northern British Columbia. In addition to archival materials, ethnographies, published oral histories, Kaska land claim submissions, and various environmental assessments have been consulted.⁹¹

⁹¹ Earlier in this project, plans were underway to conduct oral interviews with various members of the Kaska Nation. The intent of this oral history program was to gain additional insights into Kaska responses to government interventions into their land use patterns (namely trapline registration) and to understand Kaska perspectives on the land claims process and judicial concepts of Aboriginal title. However, partway through my completion of the ethics process, the liaison with the Kaska Nation passed away suddenly. As a result of this tragedy, oral histories have not been conducted for this study given the time constraints of completing the dissertation within a prescribed period time. This change in my dissertation plans was approved by the advisory committee. Rather, this dissertation is a study of how outsiders have conceptualized Kaska land use and how the Kaska incorporated these representations as they advanced land claims and responded to natural resource megaprojects within their claimed traditional territories. As

By combining environmental and Aboriginal historical lenses, it is possible to develop a greater knowledge of the various contexts in which information concerning Kaska land use and occupancy was obtained, allowing for greater scrutiny of the material and underlying assumptions with respect to land use and occupancy. Unsettled land claims in the Canadian North and extant Aboriginal rights and title offers an opportunity to understand Indigenous peoples' historical ties to place and as well as current environmental impacts on these places. This project provides a critical framework for understanding how history has shaped the notions of Kaska land use and occupancy. This study can provide a more nuanced understanding of the historical process that shaped and often simplified understanding of Indigenous land use. Additionally, this dissertation demonstrates how these perceptions were reinforced as Indigenous groups sought to secure Aboriginal title. As these simplifications developed and formalized in the courts or through the submission of land claims, the complexities of Indigenous land tenure, such as kinship ties, were obscured. Rather, Indigenous land use and occupancy was reduced to concepts of sovereignty based on band affiliations. As these colonial understandings have continued to be relevant to proving Aboriginal title, it is important to understand and appreciate how these perspectives were shaped.

Chapter Breakdown

This dissertation is divided into four parts and seven chapters, respectively. The first part is focused on exploration and the fur trade in the region. Comprised of two chapters, part one focuses on the HBC's efforts to ascertain Indigenous band affiliations as well as the environments they inhabited. Chapter one focuses on the HBC's exploratory surveys in northern British Columbia and southeastern Yukon as the company sought to acquire knowledge. This chapter

outsider perspectives have had a significant role in shaping more contemporary Indigenous land rights, this dissertation remains a valuable study in its examination.

involves a close reading of exploration narratives, such as that of servant John McLeod, and maps out what explorers learned about indigenous land use and occupancy. By considering the transfer of knowledge between Indigenous peoples and fur traders – especially as it pertains to other neighbouring Indigenous groups – it is possible to get a more nuanced view of what literary critic Mary Louis Pratt refers to as “autoethnography.” Autoethnography refers to the ways in which colonized subjects shaped representatives of themselves while these representations were simultaneously mediated by the colonizers.⁹² As these exploratory journeys generally occurred during the summer, this chapter will also consider the ways in which seasonality affected the production of knowledge.

The second chapter considers the view from the trading posts. This chapter examines post journals to see how fur traders in a fixed location acquired knowledge of Indigenous land use and occupancy. Similar to chapter one, chapter two considers how seasonality influenced the traders’ abilities to obtain information on Indigenous peoples. However, unlike chapter one, which is concerned with travel during the summer, chapter two is more concerned with the seasonal nature of Indigenous peoples’ visits to the respective trading posts. Additionally, this chapter explores the ways in which the commercial interests of the HBC shaped or filtered the knowledge obtained by traders as they sought to understand the interrelationships between the various Athapaskan groups and how these relationships affected the trade. In particular, the chapter considers how a specific band’s relationship with the HBC influenced the latter’s perception of the former. While focused primarily on how Europeans understood Indigenous peoples’ land use and occupancy, instances where traders gleaned information from Indigenous peoples are analyzed through the

⁹² Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd edition, (London: Routledge, 2008. First edition published in 1992), 8-9.

lens of “autoethnography.” By using this approach, it becomes clear that Indigenous peoples were not simply passive participants in European perceptions of their cultures.

Part two considers knowledge produced around land use and occupancy resulting from various travels through the Canadian subarctic. These journeys were undertaken by a wide variety of individuals, including geologists, sport hunters, anthropologists, and government officials. The third chapter considers the beginnings and evolution of ethnography in the British Columbian-Yukon borderlands and the seasonal nature of knowledge acquisition. More specifically, this chapter examines the interaction between seasonality and transportation technology in the carrying out of ethnographic fieldwork. Among the amateur and professional ethnographic fieldworkers discussed are George Mercer Dawson, Warburton Pike, Charles Sheldon, A.G. Morice, James A. Teit, Rev. E. Allard, and John Joseph Honigmann. Important considerations in this chapter are the transportation routes used, the duration of their time spent in the region, and which groups the ethnographers did or did not meet.

Chapter four examines how narratives shaped the knowledge of Indigenous land use through a comparison of Teit’s ethnographic fieldwork and the inquiries made by the McKenna-McBride Reserve Commission. This chapter discusses how two relatively concurrent efforts to understand Kaska (and other northern Athapaskan groups’) land use and occupancy produced dramatically different results due to two divergent views on the larger narrative of northern development and the future of the region’s Indigenous peoples. This chapter sets the stage for understanding how narrative functioned in future debates around land use and land claims. Moreover, by analysing ethnographic and state knowledge together, this chapter provides a vital segue into a more thorough discussion of state knowledge.

Part three – consisting of one chapter – focuses on the early to mid-twentieth century production of state knowledge. Chapter five analyzes the efforts by both the British Columbian and Yukon governments (in collaboration with Indian Affairs) to register traplines, giving consideration to how these efforts contributed to the creation of more rigid boundaries between various indigenous groups (both bands within the larger Kaska Nation as well as boundaries between the present-day Kaska Nation and neighbouring groups such as the Acho Dene Koe) and individuals. In conjunction with the trapline analysis, chapter five considers the role of government agencies (primarily Indian Affairs) in attempting to rigidly define band affiliations, including efforts to form various Kaska bands. Moreover, where possible, this chapter considers Kaska responses to these efforts (both resistance and accommodation). Finally, this chapter explores the interactions between governmental agencies and non-governmental actors (such as anthropologist) in defining band affiliations.

Part four shifts the focus toward the commencement of the land claims process and the concomitant reframing of history. Chapter six discusses the uses of history within the contexts of comprehensive land claims and environmental impact assessments. This chapter examines Kaska efforts to assert their land claim with the federal, British Columbian, and Yukon governments. The analysis elaborates on anthropologist Jean-Loup Amselle's concept of the ethnographic feedback phenomenon – described above – to consider ways in which colonial records are appropriated by Indigenous groups and mobilized to assert their claims against the state. Moreover, this chapter considers how narrative – and particularly the setting of the scene (generally leading toward a declensionist narrative) – were factors in the debates around land claims. Finally, the chapter looks at resource development in the Kaska territory during the years following the *Calder* decision and the Kaska's efforts to assert their rights and control over the development of their traditional

territories. This chapter considers testimony from the Alaska Highway Pipeline Commission and environmental impact assessments from the 1980s and early 1990s. Important attention is given to the use of history, particularly the use of narrative, scale, and scope as framing devices for the ways in which Aboriginal rights were debated.

This final chapter highlights the continued relevance of history to demonstrating Aboriginal title and seeking environmental justice within Kaska Dena lands. Past Eurocentric representations of Kaska land use has been mobilized as a means of demonstrating Aboriginal title. These representations of land use often conform with state requirements for proving Aboriginal title and demonstrating the existence of a land claim. This process perpetuates simplified and distilled understandings of Kaska land use and occupancy. However, as outsider perspectives on land use was used to advance Aboriginal title and efforts to secure a land claim agreement, the Kaska Dena also challenged these representations. Community-based knowledge was used in land claim submissions not only to reinforce what was found in the archives, but also challenge the colonial documentary record when the Kaska Dena disagreed with the information. The emergence of environmental impact assessments provided an additional platform for the Kaska Dena to advance their land rights and challenge the colonial understandings of their history and land use.

These chapters contain various temporal jumps, which represent a variety of factors. The temporal gaps between chapters represent a lack of continuous colonial interest or involvement in Kaska lands. For example, more than three decades passed between the Hudson's Bay Company's abandonment of its trading posts at Frances Lake and Pelly Banks and the arrival of George Dawson's survey party. Additionally, the temporal jumps reflect this dissertation's focus in individuals and institutions whose renderings of Kaska territories influenced subsequent understandings of Kaska land use and occupancy. Although there were other colonial activities in

Kaska lands throughout the duration of this dissertation – such as the Cassiar Gold Excitement – they largely ignored the Kaska.

As Indigenous peoples articulated their Aboriginal rights and title during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, they grappled with colonial representations of their land use and occupancy. Colonial records had complex and sometimes contradictory effects on Indigenous abilities to advance their land rights within the juridical and government policy-directed mechanisms to do so. In many respects, these colonial records reflected ethnocentric assumptions and the historical contexts under which these records were produced. The contexts that shaped colonial perspectives included the motivations of the historical actor for collecting information relating to the Kaska (whether they were a fur trader, anthropologist, or Indian Agent) and the environmental or geographical conditions under which they passed through Kaska Dena lands and encountered Indigenous peoples. Although the record base produced by these individuals and organizations reflected outside perspectives on Indigenous land use and occupancy, they nevertheless provided a means through which the Kaska Dena could demonstrate historical and continued occupancy of their lands. As these records provided insights into Aboriginal title, the Kaska Dena also began to deploy community-based knowledge. This knowledge sometimes supported colonial understandings, but also sometimes challenged these understandings. Thus, the historical legacy of outsider renderings of Indigenous land use simultaneously reinforced Indigenous abilities to advance their land rights, but also circumscribed these efforts.

CHAPTER ONE: “He Had Seen a Smoak at No Great Distance”: Fur Trade Exploration Narratives and Conceptions of Kaska Land Use

On 23 July 1831, Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) explorer John McLeod and his crew of eight were camped on the shore of the Liard River upstream from its confluence with the Toad River. McLeod’s dog, Spring, began barking at the presence of “strangers lurking not far from our Camp.”¹ The party’s interpreter attempted in vain to elicit a response from the nearby “strangers” by calling out in the Slave and Sekanni languages. After keeping a watch over the remainder of the night, the party disembarked from their campsite at 4:30 AM. While some of the party set out in the canoe, McLeod, Baptiste Contrat, and the hunters travelled on foot. En route, McLeod was surprised to encounter an elderly man whose family was nearby.² From this party of “Sandy Indians,” McLeod learned a great deal about the intercultural dynamics of the upper Liard River watershed, such as the location of the remainder of the “Sandy Indians” and the interrelationships between the various bands.³ McLeod also learned about the trading dynamics of the region, receiving confirmation that he was entering a region in which two chartered trading companies – the HBC and the Russian American Company – had overlapping influence. Discussing access to trade goods, he was told that they had three guns acquired from the HBC’s relatively recently-established Fort Halkett. However, they had little in the way of ammunition save for some cannon powder, which had been acquired from the Tahltan, who had received the powder through trade

¹ Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (HBCA), Fort Simpson (Mackenzie River) post journal, B.200/a/14, 24 July 1831, fol. 5d.

² HBCA, B.200/a/14, 24 July 1831, fol. 5d-6.

³ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 24 July 1831, fol. 6. McLeod was told that “the remainder of their tribe are detached in small parties on each side of the West Branch [Liard River], from an apprehension as reported to them by The’Kenies that the Crees were coming to make war upon them in Course of the Summer but had an appointed place to meet by the falling of the leaves.”

networks connecting the Russian traders on the Pacific Coast with the interior.⁴ McLeod learned more the following day:

From the Strangers I obtained a twidled bottom canoe or small boat Sail which they got from the Nahany's; it is a matter of surprise how the latter tribe could have got such an article, being of no manner of service to them, and I am inclined to think, they must have either pillaged or stolen it at or near some of the Russian Establishments; the sail is perfectly new, bolted with a line about the size of a 24 Thread Cod line, but pliable and soft, and seams are sewed with sinew as a substitute for twine[.]⁵

Within a short time period, McLeod observed that both trade items and possibly pillaged items from the Russian trading posts were reaching the HBC's doorstep.

McLeod's encounter with the "Sandy Indians" revealed many aspects of the physical, social, and cultural geography of the region. McLeod learned about various physical aspects of the landscape that he was about to travel through, including river routes and obstacles inhibiting travel. He also discussed the social and cultural geography of the region, such as the location of various Indigenous family groups and their interrelationships. What could be learned from the physical, social, and cultural geography also provides great insights into the nature of HBC exploration of this region – extending from the Liard River, up the Frances River, and into the Pelly River watershed. Each of these geographical factors influenced how exploration proceeded in this subarctic region and, concomitantly, how explorers understood the region. Moreover, each of these geographical factors interacted with each other.

The physical geography determined how HBC explorers experienced the region in a variety of ways. With rare exceptions, HBC exploration was primarily confined to river travel. Because of their general affinity for river travel as opposed to overland travel, exploration was generally confined to the summer months when the rivers were navigable. Consequently, the seasonality of

⁴ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 24 July 1831, fol. 6.

⁵ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 25 July 1831, fol. 7.

the subarctic – and particularly the onset of extended winters – limited the timeframe in which exploration generally occurred.⁶ The combination of river travel and seasonality, in turn, affected the potential interactions between explorers and Indigenous peoples. Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank has noted that many European explorers travelled by river rather than by land, limiting the extent of their observations.⁷ However, many Athapaskan groups, such as the Kaska, preferred to travel overland. This aspect of subarctic cultural geography is further reinforced in Warburton Pike's 1892-1893 travel narrative *Through the Subarctic Forest* in which he noted the existence of rafts along the Hyland River used by the Athapaskans for crossing rivers, rather than for actual river travel.⁸ One of the reasons for the Kaska preference to travel overland was the treachery of the rivers in the region. The Liard River, for example, contains many rapids. During McLeod's 1831 expedition on the Liard River, two members of his crew died while tracking a canoe through one of the river's many rapids.⁹ Similarly, during the early twentieth century, prospector Anton

⁶ Here I am building on the work of Ken S. Coates and William R. Morrison, "Winter and the Shaping of Northern History: Reflections of the Canadian North," in *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History*, eds., Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates, (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), 23-35. However, rather than limiting my focus to winter, I am examining how seasonality affected the production of knowledge relating to Indigenous land use and occupancy. While winter is certainly present in this work, it is present as a factor that served to limit the travel of HBC explorers and the ethnographic knowledge that their explorations would produce.

⁷ Julie Cruikshank, *Through the Eyes of Strangers: A Preliminary Survey of Land Use History in the Yukon During the Late Nineteenth Century*, (Whitehorse: Yukon Territorial Government and Yukon Archives, 1974), 1-2. Cruikshank also discussed the fact that most European explorers travelled through the subarctic during the summer.

⁸ Warburton Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest: A Record of a Canoe Journey from Fort Wrangel to the Pelly Lakes and Down the Yukon River to the Behring Sea*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1996). In describing Kaska travels through the Hyland River region, Pike noted that they felt that there was an evil presence in the region, suggesting that this evil presence capsized boats and drowned their occupants (77-78). Consequently, much of the fear surrounding the Hyland River appears to be related to water travel, rather than overland travel. Later in his description of Kaska travels in the Hyland River region, Pike commented: "We met nobody, although we saw several spruce bark canoes hauled up on the banks in different places. The Cascas and Liard Indians are poor boatmen, and do not make much use of the waterways, preferring to pack heavy loads through the woods to working a canoe up stream; while, if they wish to run down a river, they can make a bark or skin canoe in a few hours, and lose nothing by throwing it away at the end of the run" (81). While Pike did not describe a complete aversion to river travel, his observations nevertheless suggest a reduced likelihood of encountering the Kaska along the major river courses. In *This Was the North*, (Toronto: General Publishing Co. Limited, 1975), prospector Anton Money had described Kaska preference for overland travel: "Amos had told me earlier that the Indians of this region did not travel the rivers. They preferred to go overland, on foot. I saw the reasons now. To begin with, they were not canoemen. Few of them could swim and river travel was not to their liking. And the rivers were too savage and dangerous to serve as canoe routes" (92).

⁹ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 1 September 1831, fol. 14.

Money noted the dangers of the Frances River.¹⁰ The physical and cultural geographies of the Liard and Pelly River watersheds (and adjacent areas) interacted with northern seasonality to influence not only HBC exploration but also interactions with the resident Athapaskans. As the Kaska and colonizers moved through the land, they travelled in different ways through a shared world. These different ways of experiencing the world interacted during chance encounters along the rivers or when Indigenous peoples visited trading posts. The traders' dependence on furs and provisions encouraged the integration of these two spheres of travel within this shared world.

Another element of the physical geography of the region that affected the exploration of the region was the coastal mountains separating the Liard River watershed from the Pacific Coast. This natural barrier was further reinforced by the navigation hazards that existed along the Stikine River, which led into the interior.¹¹ However, even with these natural barriers, it was not impossible for people to pass into the interior. As noted above, McLeod witnessed evidence of the presence of Russian traders on the Pacific coast. In this case, the physical geography once again interacted with the socio-cultural geography of the region. The Tlingit on the Pacific Coast traded with the Russian American Company and proceeded to occupy a middleman position in which they traded Russian goods with the interior Athapaskans. This position was jealously guarded by the Tlingits. Protecting their middleman position meant checking the Russian advance into the interior.¹² The chain of middlemen, however, did not stop at the coast. The Tahltan also wished to

¹⁰ Anton Money with Ben East, *This Was the North*, (Toronto: General Publishing Co. Limited, 1975), 81. While noting the dangers of the Frances River, Money also wrote, "But our outfit was too heavy for that. Win or lose, we'd have to stay on the rivers." This statement further reinforces the preference of colonists to travel along the rivers in opposed to overland, despite the dangers.

¹¹ Explorer John McLeod was given some insights into the navigation challenges of the Stikine River from a group referred to as the 'Grassy Indians' during his 1834 expedition. HBCA, B.85/a/6, Fort Halkett post journal, fol. 8d-9. In *Stikine River: A Guide to Paddling the Great River*, (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 1998), canoeist Jennifer Voss describes the Stikine River's Grand Canyon as "one of the three most difficult stretches of whitewater in North America" (97).

¹² Ken S. Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 21-22, describes the increased importance of the Tlingit's

protect their middleman position with the Kaska. This desire to protect middleman positions affected HBC efforts to explore and establish posts up the Liard River watershed and the extension of these posts into the Pelly and Yukon River watersheds. All of these factors affected how HBC explorers came to understand the environment and the Indigenous land use and occupancy patterns.

As the HBC explorers entered Kaska territory, they were entering a mountainous region through which many turbulent rivers flowed. The rivers flowing through the region were part of the broader Mackenzie River and Yukon River watersheds, respectively. In the southern portion of Kaska territory is the Liard River, which empties into the Mackenzie River at Fort Simpson. Major tributaries to the Liard River are the Dease, Frances, Hyland, and Beaver Rivers. Various important lakes are also situated on this watershed, such as Dease Lake at the head of Dease River and Frances Lake at the head of Frances River. North of the Liard River watershed is the Pelly River. The Pelly River flows into the Yukon River at Fort Selkirk. There are important lakes along this watershed as well, such as Pelly Lakes on the upper reaches of the Pelly River. These watersheds are divided by mountains. The Mackenzie Mountains separate the upper Liard River and its tributaries from those of the lower portion of the river, such as the South Nahanni River. The mountains, following the present-day Yukon-Northwest Territories border, also separate the

middleman position following the arrival of Russian traders on the Pacific coast. Meanwhile, Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 146, describes how the Tlingit dominated the Tahltan in the protection of their trade networks into the interior. Finally, Katherine L. Reedy-Maschner and Herbert D.G. Maschner, "Marauding Middlemen: Western Expansion and Violent Conflict in the Subarctic," *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 4 (Autumn 1999): 715-718, describes Tlingit efforts to maintain their middleman position between the interior Athapaskan groups and coastal Russian and American traders. Reedy-Maschner and Maschner describe conflict between the Tlingit and Russians over resources. While they do not directly attribute this conflict to the Russians' inability to reach the interior, these conflicts likely contributed to confining them to the coast. For a broader discussion on Tlingit-Russian relations during this period see Andrei Val'terovich Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians in Russian America, 1741-1867*, trans., Richard L. Bland and Katerina G. Solovjova, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 145-207. For a more focused discussion on Tlingit-Russian relations in the Stikine region see Katherine L. Arndt, "Russian Relations with the Stikine Tlingit, 1833-1867," *Alaska History* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 27-43.

Pelly River from the Mackenzie River watershed. Additionally, Frances Lake is nestled among mountains, such as Simpson Tower and the Too-tsho Mountains on the eastern end of the lake.

It would be too simplistic to reduce the way the HBC viewed the environment and its Indigenous peoples to geographical factors. Explorers ventured up the Liard and Frances Rivers and down the Pelly River to its confluence with the Yukon River for a specific purpose: the expansion of the HBC's fur trading catchment area. Commercial interests interacted with the geographical factors to further shape how the traders viewed subarctic land use. As the HBC explorers passed through the country, they noted both human and environmental factors that would influence the feasibility of potential trading establishments. Primary among these factors was the presence of an Indigenous population willing to participate in the fur trade. In considering the Indigenous populations, the explorers considered band affiliations, interrelationships between the various groups, and their positions viz-a-viz middleman trading positions – particularly with the Russian American Company. For example, while the Kaska appeared to be more receptive toward the expansion of the HBC into their territory, the Tahltan and the Tlingit viewed HBC advancement westward as a threat to their own middleman positions. Understanding the ethnic divisions extending westward and the interrelationships between the different Indigenous groups was integral to ensuring the survival of trading posts.

The feasibility of trading posts was also dependent on the natural bounty (or lack thereof) of the 'hinterlands' surrounding potential trading post sites. Explorers consequently tried to gain some idea of the animal populations as they travelled. Explorers were preoccupied with elucidating the furbearer populations along the Liard, Frances, and Pelly Rivers – specifically the beaver population. These efforts were directly related to the market-driven production of knowledge. However, explorers also considered the corporeal concerns of the traders who would be resident

in these newly-opened regions. Both the human and canine residents of the posts required nourishment. Their nutritional requirement meant that explorers were also required to consider the population of animals, such as moose and caribou, as well as the location of fishing lakes.

All of these forms of knowledge interacted. This interaction was particularly evident when explorers learned about the presence of wildlife and fishing lakes through their dealings with Indigenous peoples. In fact, much of the knowledge acquired during these expeditions and recorded for posterity in journals and sketch maps was the product of interactions with Indigenous peoples. This chapter delineates the knowledge produced by explorers through first-hand encounters and knowledge acquired through interactions with Indigenous intermediaries. This chain of knowledge production is of particular importance as it relates to information relating to Indigenous groups that the HBC explorers did not encounter. For information about these groups, the explorers were reliant on information provided by people who either had amicable relations and sometimes kinship ties with these other groups, or experienced a hostile relationship with these groups. The nature of these interrelationships affected how the people encountered would have described these other groups. In writing about representations of Indigenous peoples, literary critic Mary Louise Pratt has discussed the concept of ‘autoethnography.’ Autoethnography is a process in which Indigenous peoples were able to influence representations of themselves, but on terms largely controlled by the colonizers.¹³ Fundamental to this process was the ability for Indigenous peoples to “select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.”¹⁴ While Pratt was writing about published travel narratives, this approach is also applicable to analysing representations in HBC journals. However, there are also limitations to the

¹³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd edition, (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 8-9.

¹⁴ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7.

application of autoethnography. The ability of one Indigenous group to portray another Indigenous group in a certain way limited the latter's ability to shape HBC understandings of their culture and associated land use. Consequently, during the proto-contact period, the Kaska were represented to the HBC by neighbouring groups such as the Acho Dene Koe and the Sekanni. The ways in which the Kaska's neighbours portrayed them was contingent in whether they shared an amicable or hostile relationship.

This chapter is organized chronologically, beginning with the gradual HBC approach towards the territory in which the Kaska derived their subsistence. The first explorer considered is Roderick McLeod who travelled through the South Nahanni River region in winter of 1822-1823¹⁵ followed by John McLeod's exploration of the same region in 1823. John McLeod followed up this expedition with a second expedition through the region in 1824, concurrent to Murdoch McPherson's exploration of the Beaver River region. The chapter then considers Samuel Black's 1825 exploration of the Finlay River. Following Black's exploration, the chapter moves into John McLeod's explorations up the Liard River. McLeod undertook two expeditions up the Liard River. In 1831, he travelled up the Liard River, while in 1834, he ascended the Liard and Dease Rivers and travelled over the height of land into the Stikine River watershed. Finally, this chapter will examine the explorations of Robert Campbell up the France River and into the Pelly River watershed.

The historiography of subarctic exploration during the fur trade has consisted of a strong focus on the explorers themselves. Many of these works reflect a biographical approach to the topic, focusing primarily on the leaders of these expeditions. One example of this approach is

¹⁵ Theodore J. Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration: Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 42

historian Clifford Wilson's biography of Robert Campbell.¹⁶ Other works – while not focused specifically on one explorer – have provided narratives of the gradual extension of exploration into the northern British Columbian and Yukon interiors. Meanwhile, historian Theodore J. Karamanski has provided a detailed narrative of exploration, specifically focused on fur trade expeditions. While chronicling the advancement of the HBC into northern BC and the Yukon, this work effectively situates subarctic exploration within the broader context of HBC politics and its broader agenda.¹⁷ However, Karamanski's work sometimes reflects an uncritical reading of the explorers' narratives, resulting in the repetition of ethnocentric perspectives relating to Indigenous peoples.¹⁸ While each work effectively describes the advancement of exploration and the concomitant expansion of the HBC's fur trading operations, the works provide limited analysis of the Indigenous peoples encountered and interacted with during these expeditions. Nevertheless, they provide important context for this chapter.

Other historical works have considered the inter-cultural dynamics that played out between the European fur traders and Indigenous peoples. Northern historian Kenneth Coates has examined the fur trade in the Yukon River basin, focusing on cultural exchange between the Indigenous peoples and traders. Noting that the region was one of the final areas of cultural contact between Indigenous peoples and European in North America, Coates examined Indigenous adoption of Europeans implements into their material culture, concluding that the Athapaskan societies of the Yukon River basin reflected a "cultural conservatism."¹⁹ Similarly, ethnohistorians Katherine L. Reedy-Maschner and Herbert D.G. Maschner have examined subarctic Indigenous adoption of

¹⁶ Clifford Wilson, *Campbell of the Yukon*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada).

¹⁷ Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*.

¹⁸ See Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 74. Karamanski repeats explorer Samuel Black's assertion that his Indigenous guide would not proceed further due to lack of courage.

¹⁹ Kenneth Coates, "Furs Along the Yukon: Hudson's Bay Company-Native Trade in the Yukon River Basin, 1830-1893," *BC Studies* 55 (August 1982): 50-78.

European material culture in “Marauding Middlemen.” They argue that trade items conferred status to individuals, providing fodder for violent conflicts between different Indigenous groups.²⁰ These works – particularly “Marauding Middlemen” – provide an important foundation for this chapter with respect to considering how a desire for trade goods shaped interethnic relations in the Yukon-BC borderlands. This chapter will take the analysis further by considering *how* the interethnic tensions (whether preceding, created by, or exacerbated by the fur trade) shaped how the HBC came to understand the Kaska, their band and other interethnic affiliations/relations, and their extant land use and occupancy.

Ethnohistorian J.C. Yerbury has provided one of the few analyses of fur trade accounts, seeking to elucidate land use and occupancy as it existed in the protocontact period. Using a combination of post journals, exploration narratives, and ethnographic work, Yerbury has argued that the ‘Nahanny’ who occupied the territory between the Beaver River and the South Nahanni River were the Ǝspaatotena, the eastern-most Kaska identified in anthropologist John Honigmann’s ethnographic reconstruction of the Kaska.²¹ While Yerbury provides a thorough reconstruction of a small region in present-day southeast Yukon and the continuous area in the Northwest Territories, his analysis does not extend much beyond this region – to consider the Kaska as a whole and the interrelationships between the Ǝspatotena and their neighbours. There is some discussion of the Frances Lake Kaska; however, this discussion is limited to information gleaned from John McLeod’s travels up the Liard River. Yerbury did not extend his analysis to the journals of Robert Campbell, who actually travelled through the Frances Lake region.²² Moreover, Yerbury

²⁰ Reedy-Maschner and Maschner, “Marauding Middlemen,” 703-743.

²¹ J.C. Yerbury, “The Nahanny Indians and the Fur Trade: 1800-1840,” *The Musk-Ox* 28 (1981): 43-57; Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 20.

²² While Yerbury discusses the information provided by the ‘Nahanny’ to the HBC traders regarding their interrelationships with other Kaska groups, he provides little information regarding the views of the Kaska west of the ‘Nahanny.’

provides few insights into seasonality and HBC modes of travel as it relates to the production of knowledge of land use and occupancy. This chapter seeks to expand the analysis of the HBC's understandings of extant Indigenous land use and band distribution beyond this narrowly-confined region in the southeast Yukon and southwest NWT. The following will examine fur traders' and explorers' knowledge of the upper reaches of the Liard River, the Frances River, and crossing the height of land into the Pelly River watershed.

Similar to the North West Company's (NWC) explorations northward and westward during the late eighteenth century, the HBC's explorations were motivated by a geographical misunderstanding. NWC explorers Peter Pond and Alexander Mackenzie pushed the trading company's operations northward and westward in search of a route to the Pacific Ocean. Both trader/explorers had mistakenly assumed that Cook's River (Cook Inlet) was the mouth of a large river whose source lay within what is now the western Canadian subarctic.²³ Following the 1821 merger of the HBC and the NWC this geographical theory still held sway and motivated further exploration westward.²⁴ A complimentary factor contributing to the HBC's expansion through the western subarctic was their desire to establish trading relationships with Indigenous groups inhabiting the territory between their posts on the Mackenzie and lower Liard Rivers and the Russian trading operations along the Pacific Coast. Shortly after the merger, the HBC became interested in making contact with the so-called Nahanni who were said to inhabit the Mackenzie Mountains west of the Mackenzie River. According to Yerbury, "[t]he Nahanny, during the period 1821-1835, were the only populations whose trade still involved indirect and middlemen conditions, receiving trade goods from both the Russians on the northwest Pacific coast and the

²³ Barry Gough, *Fortunes a River: The Collision of Empires in Northwest America*, (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2007), 61-62.

²⁴ Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 41.

Hudson's Bay Company traders at Fort Simpson."²⁵ It was with this goal in mind that Alexander Roderick McLeod ascended the South Nahanni River during the summer of 1822. Unfortunately, the details of this expedition have been lost; however, it is known that no 'Nahanni' were encountered.²⁶

While the inhabitants of the Mackenzie Mountains were referred to by the Athapaskans who traded at Fort Simpson as 'Nahanni,' the term has been broadly applied to numerous Athapaskan groups. The term 'Nahanni' has been interpreted to mean "Bad Indian" or a hostile group.²⁷ The use of the term 'Nahanni' was a form of 'Othering' between Athapaskan groups. Consequently, when considering the use of the term, it is important to consider the context in which it is used: which individual is using the term and from which group did they derive this term. For example, while the Indigenous peoples congregated around Fort Simpson and Fort Liard referred to the inhabitants of the Mackenzie Mountains as Nahanni, further west HBC employees, such as Robert Campbell, referred to the Tahltan as Nahanni.²⁸ While the term 'Nahanni' can be a source of confusion, by considering the context in which the term is used it is possible to gain insights into the interethnic relations between the different Athapaskan groups. In fact, while 'Nahanni' can serve to be a source of confusion, through careful contextualization and analysis the term can shed more light on interethnic relations in the subarctic.

Exploring the South Nahanni in Search of the 'Nahanni'

The first journey into the South Nahanni River region, with surviving documentation, was undertaken by John McLeod. In the summer of 1823, McLeod was instructed by the former NWC

²⁵ Yerbury, "The Nahanny Indians and the Fur Trade," 44.

²⁶ Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 41-42.

²⁷ Yerbury, "The Nahanny Indians and the Fur Trade," 43; John J. Honigmann, "Are There Nahani Indians," *Anthropologica* 3 (1956): 35-37, describes the confusion created by the use of the term 'Nahani.' In his analysis of the term, Honigmann noted that the prefix "na" means "enemy" or "hostile." He concluded that the term has little ethnographic value.

²⁸ Karamanski, *Fur Trade Exploration*, 146.

employee and then Chief Factor at Fort Simpson Willard-Ferdinand Wentzel to lead an expedition into the region in order to make contact with the Nahanni. Under his former employer, the NWC, Wentzel had unsuccessfully attempted to contact the Nahanni.²⁹ Prior to its merger with the HBC, the NWC had established trading posts on the periphery of Kaska Dena lands. As posts were established on the Mackenzie River, the NWC gained vague insights about Indigenous groups to the west. This information was compiled into a report that Wentzel produced for his new HBC employers shortly after the two companies merged.³⁰ Writing of the Liard River watershed, Wentzel observed:

[W]e have some confused accounts of two others in the upper part of river aux Liard, inhabiting the Rocky Mountains. – The first is the Nahannies & the second said to frequent the upper establishment in Peace river are known as the MacKenzie's river Indians by the same Tsilladahodinné. – It is probable that communications might be opened with all these unknown Tribes, for there are considerable rivers leading to MacKenzies river from all the different parts of the country occupied by them.³¹

McLeod's journey was the first HBC effort to draw the Athapaskan groups to the west into direct contact with the company.

McLeod's party – consisting of two Canadians, an interpreter, and seven Indigenous peoples – departed from Fort Simpson on 5 June 1823.³² While the expedition began via river travel, after a brief ascent of the South Nahanni River, the expedition struck out overland, crossing a series of mountain ranges. While not encountering the Nahanni until 3 July 1823 on a mountain range that Yerbury suggests was west of Jackfish River, McLeod's party did witness numerous

²⁹ Yerbury, "The Nahanny Indians and the Fur Trade," 45.

³⁰ Library and Archives Canada, Willard Ferdinand Wentzel fonds, MG19 A20, *Accounts of Mackenzie River with a Cart from Mr. Wentzel*, Winter Lake, Fort Enterprise, 26 February 1821.

³¹ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Willard Ferdinand Wentzel fonds, MG19 A20, *Accounts of Mackenzie River with a Cart from Mr. Wentzel*, Winter Lake, Fort Enterprise, 26 February 1821, 4.

³² HBCA, B.200/a/2, 5 June 1823, fol. 1.

signs of previous occupation of the region between the South Nahanni River and Jackfish River.³³ When encountering these signs – such as abandoned encampments – McLeod made inferences into previous occupation of the region by reading the landscape.³⁴

McLeod's reading of the landscape – and his concomitant inferences about Nahanni occupancy – consisted of observing the landscape as well as the wildlife that his party encountered en route. As an example of the latter, on 12 June McLeod observed: "Saw a Beaver close to our encampment and by the Several Vestages [sic] along the banks of the River it appears that many of those animals inhabit the upper parts of this River, having for a length of time been unmolested by any Indians – Moose Deer are also in abundance."³⁵ This observation was made two days after the party reached the confluence of the Liard and South Nahanni Rivers and beginning its ascent of the latter.³⁶ McLeod's observations indicated that the lower reaches of the South Nahanni River had seen little wildlife harvesting activities on the part of Indigenous peoples, and was likely the site of little human activity. It is possible that this region was a 'frontier zone' between the 'Nahanni' and the Athapaskans of Fort Simpson, who were not on friendly terms.³⁷ McLeod's crew struck out overland travelling generally in a westerly direction due to the difficult navigability of the river. Their course, which crossed several mountain ranges, seems to have roughly paralleled the course of the South Nahanni River.

While travelling overland, McLeod and his party continued to search for the Nahanni and read the landscape for signs of occupancy. For example, on 19 June, after having descended from

³³ Yerbury, "The Nahanny Indians and the Fur Trade," 45.

³⁴ These inferences into previous occupation of the land is similar to the reading of 'indexical signs' described by William J. Turkel in *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), xix.

³⁵ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 12 June 1823, fol. 3.

³⁶ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 10-11 June 1823, fol. 2.

³⁷ Peter Coates, "Borderland, No-Man's Land, Nature's Wonderland: Troubled Humanity and Untroubled Earth," *Environment and History* 20, no. 4 (November 2014): 499-516, examines the resilience of nature in borderlands and no-man's lands between hostile factions.

a mountain range to a small river, McLeod noted in his diary that he encountered a site in which “two or three of the Nahanny Indians had been earlier in the Spring.”³⁸ While specific details were not provided indicating why the explorer would arrive at this conclusion, it is likely that McLeod encountered the remains of a camp. His statement that the ‘Nahanny’ had been there in the early spring was possibly gleaned from his Indigenous guides who would have a better understanding of the seasonal movements of individuals in the region. Or there may have been clues remaining in the camp, indicating the season in which it was occupied. On the following day, McLeod noted the existence of a Nahanni winter camp.³⁹ The final sign in the landscape that led to the encounter between McLeod’s party and the Nahanni were footprints:

Started this morning at ½ after 4 A.M. and at 11. fell on the tracks of the long looked for Nahany Indians, which appeared not to be of a very old date and found they went in a South West direction, we followed their tracks for five hours and found they had Crossed the fourth range of Mountains in a North direction ~ the two Indians that did not join us last night having fallen on the Nahany Tracks before us, have [passed?] off with all possible speed to overtake them, we followed their foot paths for the remainder of the day, and encamped for the night at ½ after 9. P.M.⁴⁰

By identifying the tracks of the Nahanni, McLeod was interpreting ‘indexical signs’ in the same way that environmental historian William Turkel has described. As a metaphor outlining the interpretation of indexical signs, Turkel described Robinson Crusoe’s encounter with a footprint:

When Robinson Crusoe “was exceedingly surpriz’d with the Print of a Man’s naked foot on the Shore,” it was because he was able to infer the activity of other human beings on an island he though uninhabited. The footprint served as an “index” of human presence in that place in the recent past. If Crusoe hadn’t been there to see the footprint, it would still be there, but it wouldn’t signify anything. In order to function as an indexical sign, there had to be an interpreter to infer or observe the connection between the material trace and the events that gave rise to it.⁴¹

³⁸ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 19 June 1823, fol. 5.

³⁹ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 20 June 1823, fol. 5.

⁴⁰ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 2 July 1823, fol. 8.

⁴¹ Turkel, *The Archive of Place*, 66-67.

The tracks represented something to McLeod. As the goal of his expedition was to establish a direct trading relationship with the Nahanni on behalf of the HBC, what McLeod saw in these tracks was a useable past; a history which could be mobilized to advance the commercial interests of his employer. It was by following these tracks that McLeod eventually made contact with the Nahanni and, while greater details regarding the hunting and trapping territories of the Nahanni was acquired during the face-to-face encounter between the two groups, the signs inscribed in the landscape also provided fragmentary insights into Nahanni occupancy of this region.

Fire was another important factor in ascertaining the location of the Nahanni. Fire influenced the search for the Nahanni in two ways. First, fires were set by members of McLeod's party in order to signal their presence to any Indigenous peoples nearby. Often upon seeing signs of previous human habitation of a region, the party would establish a fire in the hopes that it would attract the attention of anyone in the vicinity. For example, after encountering the spring camp on 19 June, McLeod's party "made signal fires in several places on the Mountains, but no answer Could be perceived from any direction."⁴² Second, a watch was kept for signs of fire that might indicate a Nahanni presence. In reading both the landscape – and the skies – for signs of smoke and fire, McLeod and his party needed to differentiate between naturally-occurring fires and anthropogenic fires. Additionally, sometimes individuals mistakenly thought that they saw smoke:

This morning one of the Indians Came and informed me that he had seen a smoak [sic] at no great distance Westward of our encampment, which he suppose Could be made by no other than Nahany Indians, we proceeded without loss of time to the supposed place, but on arrival found to our great disappointment, that neither Smoak [sic] in any spot where fire had been made Could be found – I severely reprimanded the Indian for his incorrectness of reports⁴³

⁴² HBCA, B.200/a/2, 19 June 1823, fol. 5.

⁴³ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 24 June 1823, fol. 6.

It is possible that either dust or fog had given the appearance of smoke. It was the sign of smoke from a Nahanni fire that ultimately resulted in the encounter between McLeod's party and the Nahanni after following the tracks.⁴⁴

Having already made inferences about Nahanni occupancy of the region by interpreting signs in the landscape, it was at his meeting with the Nahanni that McLeod gleaned more detailed information regarding their territory. While providing the Nahanni with trade goods in order to entice the Nahanni into a direct trading relationship, the explorer made inquiries regarding the Nahanni's country:

In Course of the day I put several questions to them regarding the Country they inhabit ~ They told me that the greatest part of their Tribe inhabit the Country around the upper parts of the West Branch of the Riviere au Liard, and that the Westward of them are acquainted with Two other Tribes, who inform them that upon the Lands they inhabit, Beaver are very numerous.⁴⁵

The statement provided by the Nahanni indicated relations with the Upper Liard Kaska.⁴⁶ During his subsequent explorations in the 1830s, McLeod would learn more about the Athapaskans inhabiting the upper reaches of the Liard River.

While McLeod gained some tentative insights into the occupancy of the South Nahanni River watershed by interpreting various indexical signs inscribed in the landscape, and sometimes in the sky, he obtained the greatest amount of detail through discussions with the Nahanni leader, White Eyes. McLeod's discussions with White Eyes shed valuable light not only on the land used by the Nahanni – as well as the potential beaver reserves – but also served to elucidate the relationships between the Nahanni and other Indigenous groups. At the end of his

⁴⁴ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 3 July 1823, fol. 8-9.

⁴⁵ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 4 July 1823, fol. 9.

⁴⁶ See Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 19.

journey, McLeod elaborated on what he had learned from the Nahanni, and specifically from White

Eyes:

The Nahany's appear to be a manly race of men and good hunters, they are Smart, active and quick in their motions, and altho' conscious of their few and [indifundant?] State, are yet not haughty, but Seem to be peaceably inclined, without the appearance of fears or meanness [sic] – They are Clearly Hospitable and Sociable.~ The (White Eyes) Leader of this party with whom I had an interview, is a tall, Strong and robust built man, the beard on his chin he had allowed to grow pretty tough which gave him the appearance and looks of an Old Roman Sage ~ He entered cherefully [sic] into the objects of my inquiry and answered without hesitation or diffidence ~ He told me the majority of his Tribe inhabited the West Branch of the Riviere au Liard, and that he had not visited them now three Winters. ~ He know of a very large Lake, besides many smaller ones, about which Beaver was abundant, Black and Grizzly Bears are also numerous ~ With respect to large Animals, it will appear from my Journal that they are plentiful beyond description ~ Beyond the Mountains over which we had traveled, he told me he was acquainted with two different tribes of Indians whose Language were likewise different from his own ~ He expressed his ignorance of any other large Chain of Mountains, the Country he represented to be [illegible]. And frequented by immense herds of Rein Deer, such as we had ourselves killed ~ Nor Could he give us information of any Considerable Stream, which might throw any light on what we had already heard from the Dahodinees – reporting a Large River to the Westward of the Mountains ~ but he had a knowledge of the Dahodinee Tribe, with whom he had been at war – did not say if of late – in fact this is a delicate subject to touch upon with all Indians in these parts, being Suspicious and [guarded?] with Strangers, Reflecting perhaps that we might possibly misapply any information from them, to disturb the security in which they Seemed to live, These Considerations induced me not to press the Conversation that way and also influenced me to appear less inquisitive than my inclination would have led me to be.~ Therefore having permitted my Indian followers to trade what few Furs this part of Strangers had which by the bye, Consisted only of a few Martins, some Beaver, Cats and Bear Skin or two – In the Course of which the Leader made me a present of Seventeen Martins – that I accepted, and thought to have [well or will?] paid in the articles he had received of me and noticed before in my Journal Page 9.⁴⁷

This passage reinforces, as well as elaborates, upon what McLeod had written during his meeting with the Nahanni. There are a few interesting elements from McLeod's statement worth examining in order to understand how geography, commercial interests, and interrelationships between various Indigenous groups shaped the type of geographic knowledge that the trader obtained. In

⁴⁷ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 10 July, fol. 11.

his discussion with White Eyes, McLeod was interested in gaining an understanding of the land further west, specifically the topography and rivers to the west. Connected to understanding the geography was getting an understanding of the fauna – particularly furbearers and larger ungulates which could potentially support the expansion of trading posts. In this respect, commercial interests and the region's geography interacted. McLeod's newly acquired geographical knowledge (inchoate as it was) was the product of trying to produce corporate knowledge.

Commerce and geography also interacted as McLeod endeavoured to understand the interrelationships between the various Indigenous groups not yet contacted by the HBC. For example, White Eyes revealed that the Nahanni's relations inhabited the West Branch, meaning the Liard River upstream from its confluence with the Fort Nelson River (then referred to as the East Branch).⁴⁸ Upon his departure from White Eyes and the Nahanni, McLeod suggested to the Nahanni leader that he “visit his Tribe, and show to them what I had given him, and to persuade as many to follow him as he could, and meet the ensuing year, in or about the same place, where I should have a supply of the most necessary articles they wanted to give in exchange for any furs they would bring.”⁴⁹ While it is unclear whether McLeod meant for White Eyes to contact his ‘tribe’ on the West Branch, or simply those within the immediate vicinity of the South Nahanni River and adjacent watersheds, it is clear that McLeod hoped to tap into extant kinship networks in order to draw the Nahanni – and perhaps the broader Kaska Dena community – into the HBC's trade network. Consequently, McLeod was also developing corporate knowledge of Athapaskan band affiliations in order to facilitate the expansion of the HBC's operations into Kaska territory.

Equally important to understanding the expansion of kinship networks and intergroup connections was an awareness of animosities and conflicts between Athapaskans. Existing

⁴⁸ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 10 July, fol. 11.

⁴⁹ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 10 July, fol. 11-12.

conflicts between Indigenous groups posed a challenge to the development of HBC knowledge of the cultural geography west of their operations on the Mackenzie River and lower reaches of the Liard River. While questioning White Eyes, McLeod learned that the Nahanni had been at war with a group referred to as the ‘Dahodinee.’⁵⁰ However, the potentially fragile diplomatic relationship between the ‘Nahanni’ and the ‘Dahodinee’ prevented McLeod from learning more. While White Eyes had spoken of war between the two groups, McLeod elaborated that the Nahanni leader “did not say if of late – in fact this is a delicate subject to touch upon with all Indians in these parts, being Suspiciously guarded with Strangers, Reflecting perhaps that we might possibly misapply any information from them, to disturb the security in which they Seemed to live, These Considerations induced me not to press the Conversation that way and also influenced me to appear less inquisitive than my inclination would have led me to be.”⁵¹ As a result, a truly nuanced picture of the interrelationships of Athapaskans west of the Mackenzie River was not achieved. Finally, it should be noted that, although McLeod had used an interpreter to translate his discussions with White Eyes, certain aspects of the discussion might have been lost in translation.

In the course of their travels, McLeod’s guides from Fort Simpson also provided insights into their own travels through the region. For example, upon reaching a tributary to the South Nahanni River nestled between what McLeod referred to as the third and fourth mountain range, the HBC explorer noted that “The Indians inform me, that when this river discharges itself into the Nahanny River they generally make small Pine Canoes and go down Stream to the Riviere au Liard.”⁵² It is likely that it was Jackfish River. This information demonstrates how the region served as a borderland between the Indigenous traders at Fort Simpson and the ‘Nahanni.’

⁵⁰ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 10 July, fol. 11.

⁵¹ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 10 July 1823, fol. 11.

⁵² HBCA, B.200/a/2, 16 June 1823, fol. 4.

Upon his departure from the Nahanni, McLeod made arrangements for a rendezvous with them the following year.⁵³ During the summer of 1824, the HBC undertook a two-pronged effort to draw the Nahanni deeper into the HBC trade network and extend the company's operations into Nahanni territory. While McLeod undertook a similar journey to that of 1823 in search of White Eyes and his band, Murdoch McPherson travelled up the Beaver River – a tributary to the Liard River that was west of the South Nahanni River.

The 1824 journeys up the Beaver and South Nahanni Rivers, respectively, demonstrated the extent to which the motivations of an individual explorer shaped the knowledge that was produced about the landscape. In 1823 and again in 1824, McLeod was determined to make contact with the Nahanni. In endeavouring to do so, McLeod not only read the signs inscribed in the landscape but also ordered his party to set fires in order to attract the attention of the Nahanni. McLeod would follow a similar procedure during his 1824 travels. However, Murdoch McPherson on his journey up the Beaver River was more preoccupied with the presence of beavers than of Indigenous peoples. His journal contains frequent references to the abundance of beaver encountered during his travels. For example, on 14 July 1824, McPherson noted: "I have seen more Vestiges of Beaver than ever I saw in Any Other part of the Country; in every length of Our Canoe there was a Beaver Road to and from the Woods and in some places several When the Banks is less steep."⁵⁴ Among these vestiges of beavers were "many Trees newly Cut by the Beaver."⁵⁵ As McPherson ascended the Beaver River, he looked for signs of beaver and other animals along the river, such as moose tracks.⁵⁶

⁵³ HBCA, B.200/a/2, 10 July 1823, fol. 11-12.

⁵⁴ HBCA, B.200/a/5, 14 July 1824, fol. 28.

⁵⁵ HBCA, B.200/a/5, 14 July 1824, fol.27d.

⁵⁶ HBCA, B.200/a/5, 12 July 1824, fol. 27.

Although the daily entries of McPherson's journal are devoid of any references to Indigenous peoples along the Beaver River, he provided a note following his return to Fort Liard providing some light on the topic.

The Country above mentions Must be understood not as an extensive Country its Only a flat [laying?] Among the mountains– Which is of no Great extent as the Fort Liard Indians Visit it only seldom it will be a long time a treasure to them. No New Vestige of Any Strange Indians Was seen- old Encampments of the Nahanny Indians Were [found?]- and some of their Scaffolds in trees on Which they Watch the Deer to Shot [sic] them as they pass with reach of their Arrows. and [sic] were [sic] there was much decayed. – The greatest part of the Fort Liard Indians intended to have passed the Winter in beaver River that unfortunate Story of time of one of the Nahannys being killed by one of our Indians had kepted them all back.⁵⁷

This note demonstrates certain limitations of McPherson's journal, such as indicating where these old encampments were located along the Beaver River. However, McPherson also provided insights into the interrelationship between the Acho Dene Koe and the 'Nahanni' by shedding light on the enmity existing between the two groups and how it affected land use in the region. The information on the interrelations between the 'Nahanni' and the Acho Dene Koe was likely obtained from the latter reflecting Pratt's process of 'autoethnography.' In this case, the Acho Dene Koe influenced the shaping of how the HBC would understand their land use and their relationships with the Nahanni.⁵⁸ However, this note also reflects a complication to the concept of 'autoethnography' as it applies to the Beaver River region. There had been little contact between the HBC explorers and the Nahanni. This lack of contact inhibited the Nahanni's abilities to shape how the HBC would understand their land use in the Beaver River region. Rather, the Acho Dene Koe shaped this knowledge.

In the month prior to McPherson's ascent of the Beaver River, McLeod undertook another expedition in the South Nahanni River region in order to rendezvous with the Nahanni. This

⁵⁷ HBCA, B.200/a/5, 3 August 1824, fol. 29d.

⁵⁸ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 8-9.

journey once again involved reading the landscape and skies for signs of the Nahanni. In this case, McLeod's Indigenous guides and interpreters – with an intimate familiarity with the region – did more than interpret the Nahanny language into English for the benefit of McLeod. They also interpreted the landscape. For example, on 16 June 1824, McLeod recorded in his journal: “At 1 P.M. I dispatched two Indians to the borders of the River With instructions to make fires along the banks- at the same time sent an Indian after some Mountain Goat, who joined us soon after, and said he had seen a place where a few of the Nahanny Indians had been early in the Spring,- but says he Could not perceive in what direction they had taken.”⁵⁹ This example demonstrates both McLeod's dependence on the Indigenous traders at Fort Simpson to search for and interpret signs of the Nahanni, as well as the transmission of knowledge from guide to McLeod and finally into McLeod's journal.

McLeod and his travelling companions had their second rendezvous with the Nahanni on 25 June 1824. During this meeting, McLeod – through the assistance of the interpreters who accompanied him – made further inquiries into the country inhabited by the Nahanni. As McLeod wrote in his journal, “After making the leader a present of a Chiefs Clothing I conversed with Him regarding His Country, but the Want of a proper Interpreter I could get no regular nor [illegible] information which I would have otherwise Wished.”⁶⁰ In order to overcome the difficulties surrounding interpretation, McLeod invited the Nahanni leader, White Eyes, to accompany his party to Fort Simpson. On 2 and 3 July at Fort Simpson, McLeod posed more questions to White Eyes.⁶¹

⁵⁹ HBCA, B.200/a/5, 16 June 1824, fol. 35.

⁶⁰ HBCA, B.200/a/5, 25 June 1824, fol. 37.

⁶¹ HBCA, B/200/a/5, 2 July 1824, fol. 39.

The Southern Periphery: Exploring the Finlay River and Second-Hand Knowledge of the Kaska

Exploration in regions peripheral to Kaska hunting and trapping territories produced second-hand knowledge of the Kaska and their land use. In the wake of McLeod's and MacPherson's explorations of the South Nahanni and Beaver River watersheds, Samuel Black undertook an expedition into the northern region of what was then known as New Caledonia.⁶² This expedition consisted of travelling up the Finlay River to its source. He then travelled overland into the upper portions of the Stikine and Turnagain River watersheds. Samuel Black had been a member of the NWC prior to the 1821 merger with the HBC. Due to his excessive use of violence against the HBC during the fur trade rivalry, Black had initially been excluded from the merger. However, in 1823, Governor George Simpson brought Black into the HBC fold and dispatched him the following year on an exploratory journey up the Finlay River in present-day British Columbia.⁶³ While much of his journey skirted the peripheries of the Kaska's hunting and trapping territories, Black nevertheless gained glimpses into the land use and occupancy of regions that were adjacent to his travels.

As Karamanski has noted, the New Caledonia region had been explored in the late eighteenth century by members of the NWC, most notably Simon Fraser. However, given the mountainous terrain of New Caledonia, much of the region remained unexplored by Europeans. John Finlay of the NWC had conducted only a modest expedition up the Finlay River – a tributary to the Peace River – in 1797. In the years following the merger of the HBC and the NWC, Simpson came to view the Finlay River as a potential conduit to the Pacific Ocean. Initially former

⁶² Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, describes the New Caledonia region as “a vast territory that is now the northern and central interior of British Columbia” (57).

⁶³ Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 59-60.

Nor'Wester Peter Warren Dease was appointed to undertake the journey. But after a series of delays and general antipathy towards undertaking this venture, Simpson turned to Black.⁶⁴ As Karamanski noted, Simpson's instructions were not only to ascend the Finlay River, but upon completion of this task "it was hoped that he would discover the headwaters of a river that paralleled the Mackenzie. Having achieved this, he was to turn east and cross the divide, where it was thought he would meet the headwaters of the upper Liard. He was to follow the Liard until he reached Fort Liard or Fort Simpson, where he and his party were to winter."⁶⁵ This vision was never realized.

While Black was the first European to ascend the Finlay River any great distance, it is important to note the precursors to his journey and how they shaped Black's knowledge of the region. Besides the obvious fact that Black was travelling through the homeland of the Sekanni, a group of Iroquois had also ventured some distance up the river.⁶⁶ While Black may have been the first European explorer to ascend the Finlay River, he was not the first 'explorer' on the river.⁶⁷ Black would have acquired some prior knowledge of the river from the Iroquois as well as the Sekanni who inhabited the lower reaches up the river.⁶⁸ In *Fur Trade and Exploration*, Karamanski appears to view little historical significance in the Iroquois' voyages up the Finlay River, stating that "Occasionally bands of roving Iroquois trappers would move up the Finlay, but for practical purposes the fur trade ignored this area."⁶⁹ Such a view not only ignores the connection between the Iroquois' trapping activities on the Finlay River and the fur trade, but it also ignores the

⁶⁴ Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 57-59.

⁶⁵ Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 61.

⁶⁶ Samuel Black, *A Journal of a Voyage From Rocky Mountain Portage in Peace River to the Sources of Finlays Branch And North West Ward In Summer 1824*, ed., E.E. Rich, (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1955), 8-9.

⁶⁷ Here a distinction is made between viewing the Finlay River as a dwelling place (in the way that the Sekanni would have viewed it) and a place of exploration (in the way that the Iroquois and Samuel Black would have viewed it).

⁶⁸ Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 61.

⁶⁹ Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 58.

information of the region that would have been transmitted from the Iroquois to the fur traders, informing Black's expedition. The latter fact is later acknowledged by Karamanski.⁷⁰ Finally, this statement ignores the impact that the Iroquois had on the landscape through which Black passed. This impact includes the effects of Iroquois trapping activities on the wildlife populations as well as the emergence of place names indicating the Iroquois presence. For example, on 5 June 1824, Black noted that his expedition had reached a site called "Iroquois Cap."⁷¹ Historian Nicole St-Onge has noted that Mohawk men were employed by both the HBC and NWC during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when the two companies were in competition. These men proceeded to trap for furs in the Peace River and New Caledonia regions in present-day northern British Columbia. Their trapping activities in northern British Columbia continued after the merger of the two companies.⁷² This knowledge would be enlarged by information Black would obtain from other Sekanni as he ascended the Finlay River.

Black and his party departed from the Rocky Mountain Portage Establishment on 13 May 1824.⁷³ Black's party was accompanied by a Chipewyan (Dene) man named Le Prise and his wife, as well as Sekanni individual named Old Slave. It was from Old Slave that Black would acquire some of his knowledge about the country he travelled through.⁷⁴ However, Old Slave's knowledge – and that of the other MacLeod Lake Sekanni – was limited to the lower reaches of the Finlay River. On 24 May, Black commented in his journal on how little they knew of the upper Finlay River after encountering a group of Sekanni on the lower reaches of the river. Conversing with one of the Sekanni (referred to as 'Thecani' in many HBC records), Black noted, "he says he is

⁷⁰ Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 61.

⁷¹ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 36.

⁷² Nicole St-Onge, "'He was neither a soldier nor a slave: he was under the control of no man': Kahnawake Mohawks in the Northwest Fur Trade, 1790-1830," *Canadian Journal of History* 52, no. 1 (2016): 1-32.

⁷³ Black's party consisted of Joseph La Garde, Antoine Perreault, Joseph Cournoyer, J. Bt. Tarrangeau, J.M. Bouche, Louis Ossin, and Donald Manson.

⁷⁴ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 5-6.

a MacLeod Lake Thecannie and knows nothing of this River, nor does the Old Slave know it much farther but by hearsay.”⁷⁵ For more detailed knowledge about the upper Finlay River and contiguous regions, as well as the associated distribution of Athapaskan bands, Black would rely on information provided by the Sekanni he encountered on his journey.

In spite of the limitations of Old Slave’s knowledge, the Sekanni guide nevertheless provided vital information on the Liard River watershed north of the Finlay River. On 1 June, having arrived at a fork in the Finlay River, Black recorded what he learned from the Sekanni guide:

At this Fork or Branch we had some perplexity in our Councils, the Old Slave wishing to take the Minor Branch which he says leads to fall on the Liard River, moreover this is the Rout [sic] he undertook as Rocky Mountain Establishment to take us & gives the following description of it, that we can to up it perhaps for two day[s] en Canoe after its full of drift Wood & fallen Wood; & Branching out in Forks passing a hight [sic] of Land far from this We fall on the Waters of Liard River proceeding down a Small River We fall on another Branch but not yet navigable continuing down this River North direction we arrive at a Fork where the River is Navigable untill [sic] it gets amongst mountains & Falls & Rapids & none of the Thecannies ever go down further than these Rapids, that this is also the Thluckdennis or Thloadennis Lands that this River Liard is like the River We are on in a Valley between Mountains full of Islands & shallows & drift wood & Beaver like as here, that we will take a long time to get to the Rapids being very far & bad Roads on which we will find some Beaver on this Branch but not so much as we have seen coming up, that we will find some Fishing Lakes about the hight [sic] of Land but few Rein deer or other animals untill [sic] we get down for some distance when we will find plenty also Moose deer. That the other a Major Branch cutting the mountains here confining the valley, takes its rise out of a large Lake the natives call Thutade & in which there are plenty of Fish, but that he does not know the Rout [sic] only from hear say. The expedition having other considerations in view than visiting Liard River at any time by so unfavorable a Rout [sic] as this, I told the Old Slave I already knew this Rout [sic] by description & would take the big Branch, This is a disappointment to him as well as the People who had indulged their imaginations on this Rout [sic] falling into the Liard River teeming with Beaver & large animals.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 14-15.

⁷⁶ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 25-26.

Old Slave provided Black with detailed information about the territories occupied by Indigenous peoples, the distribution of game, and the seasonal nature of travel and navigation in the region. Significantly, Old Slave discussed the land used by a group of Athapaskans referred to in Black's journal as 'Thluckdennis' or 'Thloadennis.'⁷⁷ Old Slave was likely referring to a group of Tahltan.⁷⁸ Black was piecing together the land use and occupancy in the region surrounding the Kaska.⁷⁹ As the expedition proceeded up the Finlay River, Black became increasingly preoccupied with travelling into the territory of the 'Thloadennis.'

This passage also illustrates some interesting elements about the transmission of knowledge regarding Indigenous land use. Black's representations of Indigenous land use was contingent upon the information that was provided to him by Indigenous peoples. In this case, Old Slave had some control over the information that was provided. With respect to Indigenous peoples curating the information that was passed on to travellers, Black noted later in his journal his suspicions that Old Slave was not conveying all his knowledge about the country that they were travelling through.⁸⁰ In this respect, he exercised a degree of autoethnographic agency with respect to how Europeans would understand Sekanni land use and the extent of their hunting, fishing, and trapping territories. However, in the context of inter-band relations, these representations were more complex than members of an individual band acting as gatekeepers of knowledge about their subsistence activities. Old Slave and other Sekanni also discussed the land use and occupancy of other Athapaskan groups in northern British Columbia. Moreover, they described the

⁷⁷ While this initial entry refers to both names, later in the journal Black appears to have settled on the term 'Thloadennis.'

⁷⁸ Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 70.

⁷⁹ Anthropologist John Joseph Honigsmann in *The Kaska Indians*, has suggested that the Dease River Kaska "extended about halfway to Sifton Pass, where Kechika River is formed. West the Dease River Kaska ranged as far as the Cordillera" (19). It is likely approaching Sifton Pass where the Dease River Kaska territory abutted the territory of the 'Thloadennis.'

⁸⁰ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 37.

interrelationships between the various bands. This knowledge would in turn shape Black's conception of the Thloadennis prior to direct contact with them.

Black would gain more knowledge from the Sekanni he met near the headwaters of the Finlay River. It was also during this encounter that Black became increasingly resolved to travel to the land of the Thloadennis. On 15 June 1824, Black met with 'Old Chief Methodiates,' who was the chief of the Sekanni that resided on the upper portion of the Finlay River watershed. Black learned from Methodiates details relating to Sekani and Thloadennis land use and occupancy as well as the extent of Russian trading activities in the interior. Black wrote in his journal:

the Band Now here are all the Thecannies in this quarter except there may be two families at Bear Lake three days Journey from the Sources of this River Lake Thutade that the Thluckdennis or Thloadennis live on the other side of these Mountains to the North (Peak Monts) but come to these Mountains in Summer to Hunt when the Snow is melted for at present there is too much snow to hunt, that he had seen four Men Thloadennis Winter before last with whom he traded part of his hunt for Powder & small Balls Posts they get from Indians farther to the West who get it from People like us at the Sea in a Fort:—That he & his followers have 160 Beaver skins which they wish to trade with me, that he & his party generally Wintered here abouts & on the Sources of Liard River⁸¹

There are a few items of note in this passage. Methodiates laid out the various band affiliations in the immediate region, identifying families at Bear Lake which were part of the broader Sekanni linguistic group.⁸² Additionally, Methodiates described where he had spent the previous winter. His winter haunts included the upper portion of the Finlay River as well as what Methodiates described (as mediated by Black) as the headwaters of the Liard River.⁸³ Methodiates also told Black that the Thloadennis inhabited the region north of the mountains that confined the Finlay River watershed and that they hunted in the mountains during the summer. The chief also provided

⁸¹ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 51.

⁸² Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir fonds, I-A-235M, James A. Teit (1915), B635, f 14, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, Telegraph Creek, BC, 13 October 1915.

⁸³ In describing this region as the headwaters of the Liard River, Methodiates was likely referring to one of the southern tributaries to what is today referred to as the Liard River.

insights into the seasonal nature of the Thloadennis' hunting activities in the mountains by noting that at this stage of summer there was still too much snow for them to hunt in the region. This information highlights the importance of the vicissitudes of the seasons to the hunting and trapping activities in the region. Finally, and probably most alarming to Black and his HBC employers, the trader learned that Russian trading goods were reaching Athapaskan groups in the interior. As Methodiates noted, the Thloadennis had acquired various European trade goods through trading with Indigenous peoples to the west of themselves.⁸⁴ On the Pacific coast, various maritime traders had established trading relationships with coastal Indigenous groups, such as the Tlingit. While Russian traders had established a presence on the west coast through the creation of the Russian-American Company, other nationalities, such as the Americans, also participated in the Pacific fur trade. Since the gun powder and balls identified by Black were implements used with firearms, it is likely that the trade goods were secured from an American vessel. While the Russia-American Company (RAC) had a strict policy of not trading firearms with Indigenous peoples, the American traders observed no such restriction.⁸⁵ Russian trade goods infiltrating the subarctic interior would become a preoccupation of HBC employees and explorers in the subsequent decades.

Methodiates also described the environment north of the Finaly River watershed. His descriptions of this land was far from sanguine. The chief described a country – based on Black's rough translations of the term in corresponding Cree and Chipewyan words – as a barren land reflecting a “Grassy Meadow” as opposed to a wooded country. Black concluded that the region was “less of a Beaver Country than the Mountains We have come through.”⁸⁶ In spite of this

⁸⁴ These trade goods were likely acquired from the coastal Tlingit or the Thloadennis' northern Tahlтан neighbours who were referred to in much of the fur trading literature as the 'Trading Nahanni.' The 'Trading Nahanni' had in turn received trade goods from the Tlingit further down the Stikine River.

⁸⁵ Reedy-Maschner and Maschner, “Marauding Middlemen,” 716.

⁸⁶ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 54.

information, Black expressed a desire to be guided to the territory of the Thloadennis. In his efforts to secure Sekanni guides to lead him north, Black came up against the limitations of the Sekanni's geographical knowledge, the potential environmental limitations of sustaining northward exploration, and the seasonal constraints of mountain travel:

in answer to the Old Chiefs wishing to Trade Beaver I told him that at this time I did not come as a Trader but to Try with Goods to see the lands, that I had brought some to pay for provisions & to give to those who hearkned [sic] to my words, that I wished to go to the Source of the River (Thutade) & wanted a couple of Thecannies to Guide us that after I wanted to see the Thloadennis & expected he would no refuse to Guide us to their Lands; he said he did not know the Country far, that there were no Fishing Lake further than Thucatade he now came from & that at present there was too much Snow on the Mountains to hunt & that we would all starve together [sic], but in some time hence the young Men could go in the Mountains & kill a Sheep or a Goat that he would share the hunt with us but not to deceive us or to tell a lie, although they did not starve they never had much to spare.⁸⁷

Inter-ethnic diplomacy also jeopardized his travel plans. According to the members of Methodiates' band, they were unsure and apprehensive about how they would be received by the Thloadennis.⁸⁸

Black was persistent in his desire to travel to the Thloadennis lands.⁸⁹ On 17 June, Methodiates agreed to guide Black. Methodiates also reiterated his previous warnings. The chief affirmed that everything he had told Black the previous day was factual and that he wished to avoid being accused of deceiving Black's party.⁹⁰ Methodiates reinforced how little he knew of the region as well as the perils of travelling over the mountains so early in the season:

he would go with us to the Thloadenni as far as he knew the country, at present there was too much snow, but in some time hence more than 20 days we could

⁸⁷ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 54-55.

⁸⁸ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 56-57. Black noted in his journal that the Sekanni informed him that the Thloadennis "had their own Traders, that they the Thecannie were not afraid of them, but they were not their Masters I told them that if I saw the Thloadennis I would be kind to them & give them some small articles they were in want of & if I found them bad Dogs & unkind to us We would never go back to their Lands" (57).

⁸⁹ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 58. Black recorded in his journal after his initial failed efforts to secure Sekanni guides: "Returned to the Camp resolved on seeing the Source of Finlays Branch & the Thloadennis" (58).

⁹⁰ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 58.

march & hunt & untill that time he & his followers (except two going with us) were to live at Lac Thucatade & that we might go to Thutade & live there with two Indians as Guides & after come & find him at Thucatade⁹¹

Black was sceptical that Methodiates was being entirely forthcoming with him, noting in his journal: “he pretends to know nothing of the Lands & not sanguine in his expectations in living.”⁹²

Nevertheless, the negotiations to secure Sekanni guides highlights the physical and cultural geography of subarctic British Columbia and contiguous regions in Alaska. These negotiations included discussions about the seasonal nature of travel through the mountains as well as the potential for the environment to sustain a travel party – particularly in relation to the existence (or lack thereof) of fishing lakes. Moreover, the negotiations involved discussions of interrelationships between the Sekanni and the Thloadennis, hunting activities in their ‘borderland’ or ‘frontier’ region, and finally the extant trading network that extended to the Russian traders on the Pacific coast.⁹³

As Black’s party crossed over from the Finlay River watershed into that of the Stikine River, Methodiates travelled ahead in order to make contact with the Thloadennis. The first meeting between Black and members of the Thloadennis occurred on 15 July 1824.⁹⁴ Black offered them tobacco gifts.⁹⁵ He then proceeded to speculate on the Thloadennis’ familiarity with the fur trade that had been carried out east of their land, as well as inquire into interrelationships between the Thloadennis and other Indigenous groups in the region. Moreover, Black made further inquiries into the geography of the region in trying to determine the existence of a major river leading to the Pacific Ocean:

⁹¹ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 58.

⁹² Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 58.

⁹³ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 54-58.

⁹⁴ Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 69-70.

⁹⁵ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 109.

I observed to these Wild Inhabitants of the mountains, that although they had never seen us before, they must have heard of us always, that towards the rising sun farther than their Mountains & farther than their imaginations could carry them, we had made Establishments to trade with Indians over the Lands also towards the Babines & midday sun we had many establishments & as far as the Sea, that there had been untill [sic] lately two great parties Trading in the Country, which was the cause of our not coming here to see their Lands before, but now we were formed into one & one & the same People & that we were now come to see if there were any of their relations hereabouts, pitiful & in want of a Kettle a Gun a Hatchet a Knife or Fire steel, that they know we all came on their Lands to trade a Beaver a Marten a Bear a Fox besides all the skins they could kill on their Lands, That I asked of them to tell me all they knew of their Relations & of their Lands & of the Tribes they knew near them & if they wanted to trade with us or an establishment on their Lands, that we could come here with Goods in Canoes, if they could procure some Furs & make a little Provisions to Trade for Amunition [sic] to kill animals for themselves & for us, moreover that I required of them information of the large Rivers they had seen on their Lands, whether they run to the rising or setting [sic] sun to the midday sun or opposite whether there were Salmon or other Fish in them, or any large Lakes, & to tell no lies, for the White People hated Liars.⁹⁶

The Thloadennis affirmed their familiarity with the fur traders to the east and shed light on the interrelationships between the various Athapaskan groups in the region. One speaker for the Thloadennis commented that they were aware of various individuals employed by the HBC, such as John McLeod. Black also learned that the Thloadennis population had recently been greatly reduced due to starvation.⁹⁷

Black also learned about Thloadennis hunting and trapping territories: “that their Lands are about the sources of Liard River & this [Stikine] River to the northward.” The explorer was also told of the formerly abundant caribou population (referred to as ‘Rein deer’ in his journal). Black speculated that animal’s population had dwindled due to hunting “when the Thloadenni were numerous surrounding them into snares.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 109-110.

⁹⁷ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 110-111.

⁹⁸ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 111.

Two days later, on 17 June, Black acquired information about band affiliations and the interrelationships of the Athapaskan groups between the Thloadennis and Indigenous groups already encountered by the HBC to the east. This knowledge enhanced the knowledge produced by John McLeod's earlier explorations. This information was mediated through the Sekanni who had led Black and his party to the Thloadennis:

The Thecannie Chief made his report that the Thloadenni knew no other River than this River Liard & Babine River that the Nahannie traders came up this River to find them far to the North of this, that they are not McLeod's Nahannies but got goods from the People at the Sea & got them from Doahennis & came from the seting [sic] sun kill Rein deer & Beaver but not much, that they come far that they take Fish at the end of Rapids, that they never make Canoes & walk some distance from the River & come up the small Rivers at certain places or Roads, moreover the Thloadenni Lands are all Mountains, nor do they know a level Country, that there are not many animals or many Beaver, nor will we see any Indians, that we will always be walking in bad Roads & will starve &c &c, so I am just as wise as I was by Old Methodiates examination of the Thloadenni & its either truth or that the whole are combined against the voyage & I may stand alone on one side.⁹⁹

From these details, Black learned of another 'Nahanni' group, distinct from the 'Nahanni' that McLeod met on the South Nahanni River (a further indication of the problematic nature of the term). While the Nahanni encountered by McLeod were likely the Espatotena, identified by anthropologist John Honigmann as the easternmost Kaska,¹⁰⁰ the Nahanni described in the above passage were another Tahltan band. These Tahltan had established a middleman position in the fur trade between the Russians and coastal Tlingit and other Athapaskans in the interior.¹⁰¹ They would come to be referred to as 'Trading Nahanni' in HBC records and would inhibit the westward expansion of the company's fur trading operations. These challenges were experienced particularly by HBC explorer Robert Campbell.

⁹⁹ Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 118.

¹⁰⁰ Honigmann. *The Kaska Indians*, 20.

¹⁰¹ Ready-Maschner and Maschner, "Marauding Middlemen," 724-725.

The distinction between the two groups of 'Nahanni' is also significant as it provided the HBC with glimpses into the interrelationships between Indigenous peoples around the headwaters of the Stikine River and those near the already established posts on the lower reaches of the Liard River. By noting this distinction, the HBC further elucidated the extent to which the Nahanni encountered by McLeod were related to Athapaskan groups further west. While McLeod had learned from White Eyes that the latter's relations resided towards the headwaters of the Liard River, Black learned from the Thloadennis and Sekanni that this relationship did not extend to the Nahanni of the Stikine River.

While further exploring the headwaters of the Stikine River, Black learned more about the unexplored (by fur traders) land that lay between the lower end of the Liard River and the Stikine River. Like much of the information acquired by Black, these insights were provided by the Sekanni chief Methodiates. The chief described the lands neighbouring the Stikine River watershed:

Methodiates tells us that the large Valley here described & going west runs the River Thutadzué or Schadzue taking its rise in the scoop of broken Mountains at the East end of the Valley & that on the other side of these Mountains lies Thucatchitude or the Great Waters a Lake & the Source of Liard River & bears from this place about North, that it runs a long way in a Valley between Mountains in the same course (N by Compass) receiving other streams & one large Fork from the West where it is navigable turning to the rising Sun & after cuts mountains & very bad to walk & Rapids & Falls that the Thecannies never went farther, but to go there it was not very bad, that two years ago he had come over these mountains & came down Schadzue as far as the Thloadenni Road below this & killed 40 Beavers in this River & this is the farthest extent of his peregrinations, that this is very bad walking in the valley swamps & thick woods & not able to carry our Baggage & put it in securely here & as long as he had a bit of meat, he wished to return to his followers, that there were not more animals on Liard River than here before we went far down it to get amongst the Large Animals.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 134-135.

In the transcribed version of Black's journals, fur trade historian E.E. Rich has speculated – most likely correctly – that the “Great Water” was probably Dease Lake. Rich then proceeded to reference the works of geologist George Dawson and anthropologist Diamond Jenness to indicate Kaska or mixed Kaksa-Sekanni use of the region.¹⁰³ While not necessarily providing information into Kaska hunting and trapping activities in the region, Methodiates, as mediated through Black, provided foundational knowledge of a region that the HBC would explore a decade later. Moreover, Methodiates discussed Sekanni travels in the Liard River watershed. In 1834, John McLeod would travel up the Liard and Dease Rivers, arriving at the lake described by Methodiates. However, before this undertaking, McLeod departed on a less ambitious venture up the Liard River.

John McLeod and the Liard River

In 1831, John McLeod undertook his first expedition towards the headwaters of the Liard River. Beyond the confluence of the Liard and Fort Nelson Rivers, the upper portion of the Liard River was referred to in HBC records as the West Branch. Since Black's ascent of the Finlay River, a treaty had been established in 1825 between Britain and Russia establishing a boundary between the territories claimed by each imperial nation. This boundary commenced at the Arctic coast and proceeded south following the 141st meridian. From Mt. St Elias, the boundary then followed the coastal mountain range south to 54°40' N. However, as McLeod would soon learn, this treaty did not cease the flow of furs towards the coastal trading establishments. It was against this backdrop of HBC competition with the Russia American Company that McLeod would learn about the fur resources of the Liard River and Indigenous occupancy of the region.

¹⁰³ E.E. Rich in Black, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 134-135fn.

McLeod and his party of six HBC engagés and two Athapaskan hunters departed from Fort Simpson on 28 June 1831. They arrived at Fort Liard on 3 July and remained there for a week waiting for the high water to subside. Their travels resumed on 10 July.¹⁰⁴ During the party's ascent of the Liard River, McLeod recorded observations on the navigability of the river, the fur resources, other wildlife, and signs of Indigenous peoples. Often these observations interacted with each other. For example, upon reaching the confluence of the Beaver and Liard Rivers, McLeod recorded in his journal: "Here we found Baptiste Contrats and a party of the Fort de Liard Indians, who Mr McPherson had equipped early in June, and sent across land to the heights of Beaver River, for the purpose of making a Beaver hunt, at the same time to supply us with Provisions for the voyage."¹⁰⁵ McLeod demonstrated the Acho Dene Koe's use of the Beaver River region for hunting and trapping purposes. However, what remained unclear was whether their use of the region had been a consequence of the expanding fur trade since the HBC had already established Fort Halkett on the Fort Nelson River watershed and it was not uncommon for the Acho Dene Koe to travel between Fort Liard and Fort Halkett.¹⁰⁶

McLeod learned more about Indigenous land use as his party proceeded beyond the territory traversed by the fur brigades. When the party reached the mouth of the Toad River, McLeod noted the importance of this river as a loosely-defined boundary between the Acho Dene Koe and a group that he referred to as the 'Sandy Indians':

Toad River is the boundary of the Fort de Liard and Sandy Indians, the former (altho' seldom) come across land for the purpose of making Provisions about the entrance of the river and as there is no impediment in the navigation, seldom or ever fail in collecting a quantity which they bring to their Establishment in Canoes made of the bark of Pine Trees.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ HBCA, B.200/a/14, Fort Simpson (Mackenzie River) post journal, fol. 3.

¹⁰⁵ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 16 July 1831, fol. 4.

¹⁰⁶ This aspect of Indigenous movement will be discussed in chapter 2.

¹⁰⁷ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 20 July 1831, fol. 5.

McLeod also hinted at the porous nature of this boundary by suggesting that the Acho Dene Koe travelled west of the river in order to procure provisions. However, McLeod also hinted at the possibility that the Acho Dene Koe's crossing of this boundary might have been motivated by the expansion of the HBC posts. The explorer suggested that the provisions trade was the reason the Acho Dene Koe hunted west of the Toad River.

Significantly, in describing this 'borderland,' McLeod provided a glimpse into the eastern extent of Kaska land use. Karamaski has speculated that the Sandy Indians were likely part of the Kaska Nation.¹⁰⁸ Going by Honigmann's ethnographic reconstruction of the Kaska, it is possible that the Sandy Indians were the Tse'lonas.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, prior to McLeod encountering any 'Sandy Indians' during his ascent of the Liard River – through the use of information provided by other Indigenous groups – he had constructed a borderland which would serve to define HBC concepts of the eastern limits of Kaska land use.

On 24 July, McLeod's party encountered a group of people who had yet to establish a direct trading relationship with the HBC. The party was first alerted to the presence of "strangers" by McLeod's dog, Spring. As the party proceeded upriver – and McLeod, Contrat, and the hunters advanced on foot to lighten the canoe – they met an elderly man. While he did not understand the Slave language, he understood Sekanni. As McLeod's hunter translated what the 'stranger' had to say, McLeod learned about Indigenous communication networks as they extended beyond the trading posts, the interrelationships between the various Athapaskan groups, and the reach of the Russian trade network. The elderly man told McLeod that he had remained in the region because the Sekanni who traded at Fort Halkett informed him that the traders would be ascending the Liard

¹⁰⁸ Karamanski. *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 100.

¹⁰⁹ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 12 and 19.

River.¹¹⁰ As this information was communicated to McLeod through an interpreter, it is likely that this knowledge was refracted, adding another layer of complexity to the production of knowledge. The elderly man then retrieved his family, who were nearby. Upon meeting the man's family, McLeod learned more about interrelations between different groups and the fur trade dynamics of the upper Liard River:

[T]he party consisted of Four men of the Sandy Indian Tribe, one of the ThloetChosse Indians, Four Women and twelve children, they informed me that the remainder of their tribe are detached in small parties on each side of the West Branch, from an apprehension as reported to them by The'Kennies that the Crees were coming to make war upon them in Course of the Summer but had an appointed place to meet by the falling of the leaves, the party had three guns traded recently from the Fort Halkett TheKennies but were destitute of amunition [sic], save a small quantity of cannon Powder which they had got from the Nahany's a tribe West of the mountains, who trade at or near some of the Russian Establishments, they say we are now about two days march from the Falls, but in many places, parts of the River dangerous to surmount from the same causes as I have already mentioned¹¹¹

While not discussing the band affiliations of women and children, McLeod nevertheless surmised a possible close affiliation between the 'Sandy Indians' and the 'ThloetChoose.' This observation hints at a fluidity in the interethnic relations and identities among the subarctic Athapaskans. They also demonstrated the intersecting fur trading networks on the Liard River. Individuals provided material evidence of Russian trade items reaching the interior. However, they also noted that they had received firearms from the Sekanni who traded at Fort Halkett. Finally, they provided information about waterfalls further up the Liard River. This information allowed McLeod to gain information about upstream navigational hazards and Indigenous land use and occupancy. To commemorate this meeting, McLeod named a small stream near this encounter Stranger River.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 24 July 1831, fol. 5d-6.

¹¹¹ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 24 July 1831, fol. 6.

¹¹² HBCA, B.200/a/14, 24 July 1831, fol. 6.

On the following day, McLeod made further inquiries of the ‘Strangers’ to determine the feasibility of establishing fur trading posts on the West Branch. McLeod was told that they did not have any furs as they had already traded with the Sekanni. Nevertheless, the group of primarily ‘Sandy Indians’ expressed their desire to see a trading post established in their territory and extolled the natural abundance of the land, suggesting that there was a large population of furbearers as well as larger game animals.¹¹³ The party of ‘Sandy Indians’ also described the population of the region: “They report their tribe to be numerous, inhabiting the Country on both sides of the West Branch below and above the falls.”¹¹⁴ This information was likely provided to McLeod with the intent of making their territory appear a more desirable location for the establishment of a trading post. One of the ‘Sandy Indians’ joined McLeod’s party as a guide up the West Branch to its confluence with Smith River. While travelling with the expedition, the guide provided information on the natural resources of the region. For example, he noted that there was an abundance of beaver up the Smith River.¹¹⁵

This encounter also contrasted the HBC’s mode of travel in comparison to the Kaska and other Athapaskans. On 25 July, McLeod reported, “Being the intention of our new acquaintance to cross the West Branch, they required to be crossed with our Canoe, which was complied with, and altho’ few in number the Baggage and Dogs was obliged to make two Trips.”¹¹⁶ Moreover, upon persuading one member of the ‘Sandy Indians’ to accompany their party above the falls on the West Branch, McLeod noted that he refused to travel in the canoe but would only travel

¹¹³ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 25 July 1831, fol. 6d.

¹¹⁴ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 25 July 1831, fol. 6d.

¹¹⁵ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 1 August 1831, fol. 8d.

¹¹⁶ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 25 July 1831, fol. 6d.

overland.¹¹⁷ These instances highlight the overland travel pursued by the Indigenous peoples of the Liard River drainage in contrast to the HBC's inclination to travel by river.

Further up the Liard River, McLeod's party encountered another group of Athapaskans. According to McLeod, this group consisted of 'Thlo et Chosse Indians.' McLeod learned more about the band affiliations and fur trading dynamics extending towards the Pacific coast. The Thlo et Choose told McLeod of a band referred to as the 'Alder Indians' (most likely Tlingit) whose territory extended from the coast to the upper reaches of the Liard River and Simpson Lake.¹¹⁸

Similar to his previous expeditions in the South Nahanni River region, McLeod interpreted material remains in the landscape in order to further understand Indigenous land use. On 11 August, McLeod found some material remains on a small island near the confluence of the West Branch and a river that the explorer names McPherson's River (now known as Hyland River):

there is a small Island, on which the Natives had once made a Deposit of Provisions, it was erected on four posts, 10 feet above the ground 7 broad 18 in length, and from the quantity of wood chopped and size of the Camp, I would infer a strong party must have remained at this place for some length of time¹¹⁹

Upon encountering other signs of Indigenous occupancy, McLeod deduced the direction that the camp occupants were travelling.¹²⁰ On one occasion, when encountering an unoccupied camp in which he found bundles of furs, McLeod decided to participate in trading activities – in spite of the absence of anyone to trade with directly. On 24 August, McLeod's party reached a lake that the fur trader/explorer named in honour of the HBC Governor George Simpson. While at Simpson Lake, the party found a cache of furs:

here we found recent vestiges of the Natives, and from the size of their Camp, I would infer that they resort to this place Spring and Autumn for the purpose of Fishing, after a Short stay at the entrance of the Lake we proceeded on to the other

¹¹⁷ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 15 July 1831, fol. 7.

¹¹⁸ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 28 August 1831, fol. 13d-14.

¹¹⁹ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 11 August 1831, fol. 11.

¹²⁰ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 19 August 1831, fol. 12.

end in expectation of finding some of the natives in which we were disappointed~ We landed on a small island at the north end where we found a Depôt made by some of the natives of part of their property; being anxious to know if they had any European manufacture, I ordered one of the men to untie their bundles but found nothing that could convince me they had ever seen Whites- in one of their bundles there were 3 Beaver skins which I took, and left in exchange 3 Knives, 1 Fire Steel, 2 Indian Awls, 2 Gunflints, and 20 Ball and powder.¹²¹

These remains of camps and caches provided McLeod with material evidence of Indigenous land use which was complementary to what he had learned from his interactions with Indigenous individuals as he travelled.

Following his return to Fort Simpson, and as requested by Chief Factor Smith, McLeod wrote a brief report about the Indigenous peoples and fur resources of the West Branch. McLeod noted that the chief of the ‘Sandy Indians’ had recommended the establishment of a trading post at the confluence of the Smith and Liard Rivers. Moreover, McLeod suggested that McPherson’s (Hyland) River would provide access to ‘Tou et choe tinnies’ lands. Finally, he suggested that the Indigenous population along the West Branch was sparse while the ‘Tou et Choe tinnies’ and ‘Nahany’ were more numerous.¹²²

Complementing this summary, McLeod provided a sketch map (see Figure 1-1) that laid out the course of the West Branch and its tributaries. Additionally, McLeod provided a rough approximation of the hunting and trapping territories used by the Indigenous groups who inhabited the watershed. The information provided on the map was an amalgamation of McLeod’s direct observations and experiences, as well as information provided by his Acho Dene Koe hunters and the Kaska who he had met *en route*.

McLeod ascended the Liard River again in 1834. During this journey, rather than travelling towards the source of the Liard River, he ascended the Dease River and crossed overland to reach

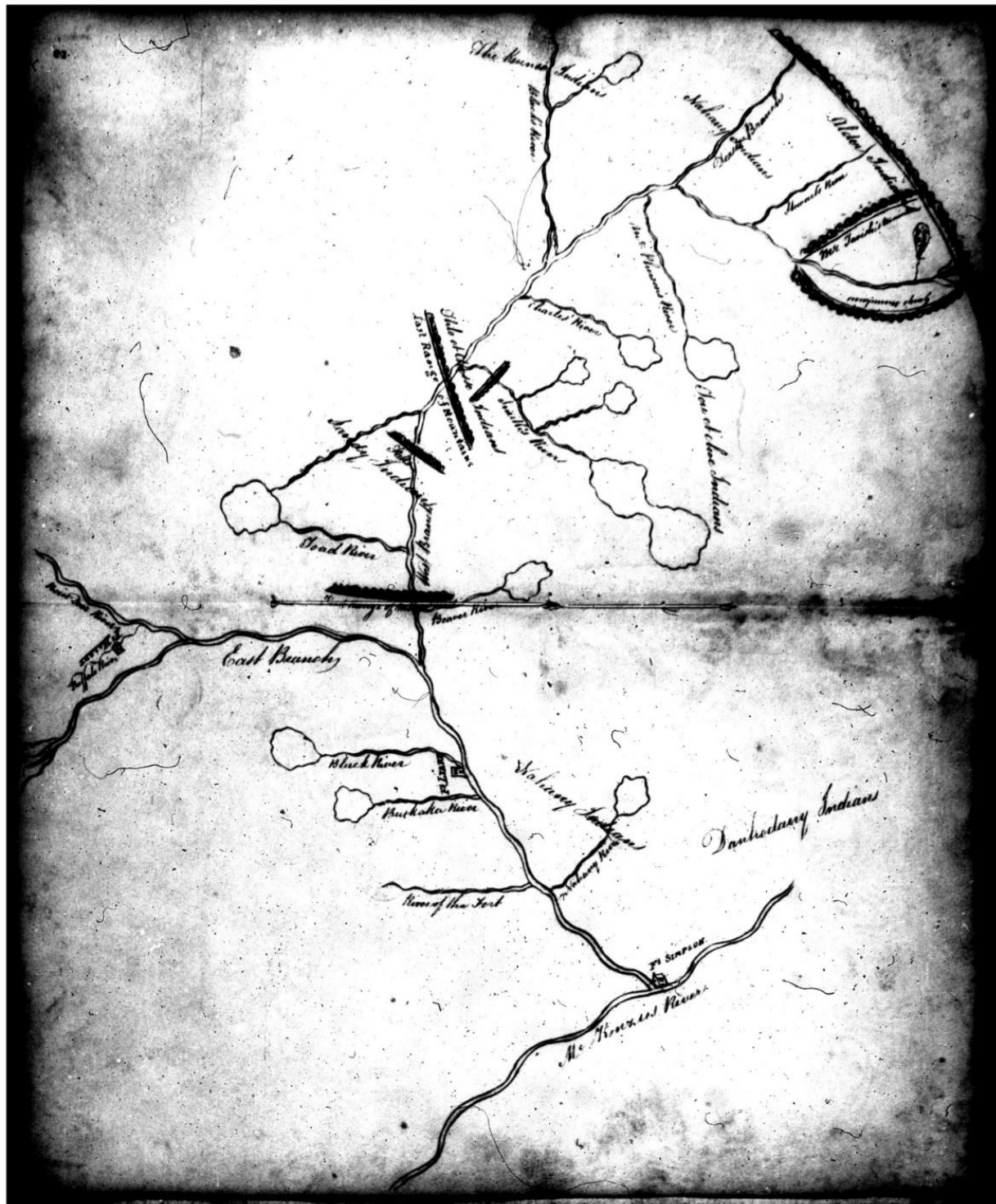
¹²¹ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 24 August 1831, fol. 13.

¹²² HBCA, B.200/a/14, fol. 15-15d.

the Stikine River watershed. During this expedition, McLeod once again employed many of his similar tactics of reading the landscape for signs of Indigenous occupancy and making conspicuous displays of his own presence in order to attract attention from the region's occupants. During his journey, McLeod and his expedition members built fires in the hopes that the smoke would draw the attention of nearby Indigenous families. They also fired shots in the air to draw additional attention to their presence. However, their efforts to attract Indigenous peoples to their encampment were in vain.¹²³ For the majority of the expedition, McLeod and his party did not encounter any Indigenous peoples in the Dease and Stikine River region.

¹²³ HBCA, B.86/a/6, Fort Halkett post journal, 11 July 1834, 3; 31 July 1834, fol. 5d.

Figure 1-1: Map from John McLeod's 1831 Expedition¹²⁴



¹²⁴ HBCA, B.200/a/14, fol. 1d-2.

As McLeod interpreted evidence of Indigenous occupancy, his readings of material remains was influenced by information he had acquired from other Indigenous peoples. For example, McLeod's journal entry for 16 July 1834 reads: "in course of last Season a large party of Indians must have remained for some length of time, where they made several Pine bark Canoes, and the stumps and chips of Two large Poplar trees near the spot must have been made Two wooden ones, and from the information I received from the Natives in this quarter must have been Nahany Indians."¹²⁵ Much of the contextual information may have been provided by the Indigenous peoples who traded at Fort Halkett. However, it is also apparent that McLeod had subsequently been provided information by a group that he referred to as the 'Grassy Tribe.' Information provided by the 'Grassy Tribe' corresponds with McLeod's inferences regarding the 'Nahany' or, more accurately Tahltan, boats.¹²⁶ The use of information by the 'Grassy Tribe' not only indicates the importance of Indigenous knowledge to support McLeod's descriptions of material evidence of human occupancy, but also suggests that the journal was produced after the expedition.

McLeod also inspected the personal property of Indigenous peoples in order to gain a better understanding of the trading dynamics of the region. For example, when his party arrived at an unoccupied encampment of the Tahltan on the banks of the Stikine River, McLeod inspected the trade articles that the individuals had left there and left a note indicating the explorer's presence:

I secured a few articles suspended in one of the Indian Tents to which I attached a note (addressed to the first Person who might be able to [peruse?] its contents) and by signal ordered such of my Party as was on the opposite shore to begin to retrace back their steps & before my departure I took a minute examination of the property left in deposit by the Indians, and found several payments of Cloth and Blanketing, and in no degree could I make any difference and that supplied by the Company; in one of the panels was a new Gun lick stamped Barnett, and in one of the Tents a box about 3 feet square neatly made of Pine with a sliding Cover and from the

¹²⁵ HBCA, B.85/a/6, Fort Halkett post journal, 16 July 1834, 3-4.

¹²⁶ HBCA, B.85/a/6, fol. 8d-9.

workmanship I would infer must have been made by a Tradesman; but for what purpose intended is a conjecture. Having left every possible mark by which the Native might perceive, we had paid a Visit to their Lands, we began to retrace back our Steps¹²⁷

This incident demonstrates one of the more invasive ways in which McLeod sought to elucidate not only Indigenous occupancy of the region, but also the reach of the coastal fur trade.

McLeod's party finally encountered Indigenous inhabitants of the Dease River region on 11 August as they descended the river on their return to Fort Halkett. On the Dease River, McLeod met a group of families who he referred to as the 'Grassy Tribe.' The 'Grassy Tribe' were likely members of the Ki'stagotena or Dease River Kaska identified by Honigmann.¹²⁸ In conversation with the members of the 'Grassy Tribe' McLeod was informed about the trading relationships between Fort Halkett and the Pacific coast and the relationships between the various Indigenous groups extending westward. McLeod wrote of his encounter with the 'Grassy Tribe':

Left our Camp of the night at an early hour, at 1 p.m reached in sight of the spot where we had made a small deposit of Provisions on our way up, at some place found Four Indians with their Families, who had been for some time past near the margin of the River, waiting our return, they were of the Grassey Tribe, and for the first time seen Europeans; they were informed of my intended Visit to that Quarter by some of the Indians who had visited the Establishment early in Spring, they informed me that they were annually in the habit of trading with the Nahany Indians, and are perfectly acquainted with the Country over which we travelled, with other information regarding the Country West of the Mountains, which will be hereafter mentioned, my new acquaintances had only 23 Beaver, which they traded for ammuniion, but say that they secured [upwards?] of 100 Beaver in deposit, which they had killed early in the Season on the north side of West Branch, which they faithfully promise to bring to the Establishment in the Autumn: among the Party they had only one Gun, which they obtained from the Indians who had a [sic] paid a visit to the Fort, in other necessities they were equally wretched.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ HBCA, B.85/a/6, 31 July 1834, fol. 5d.

¹²⁸ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 12 and 19.

¹²⁹ HBCA, B.85/a/6, 11 August 1834, fol. 6d.

McLeod confirmed both the relative isolation of the 'Grassy Tribe' from direct trading relationships with Europeans as well as their position between two European trading networks. McLeod's journal also indicates the Grassy Tribe's familiarity with the Dease River region.

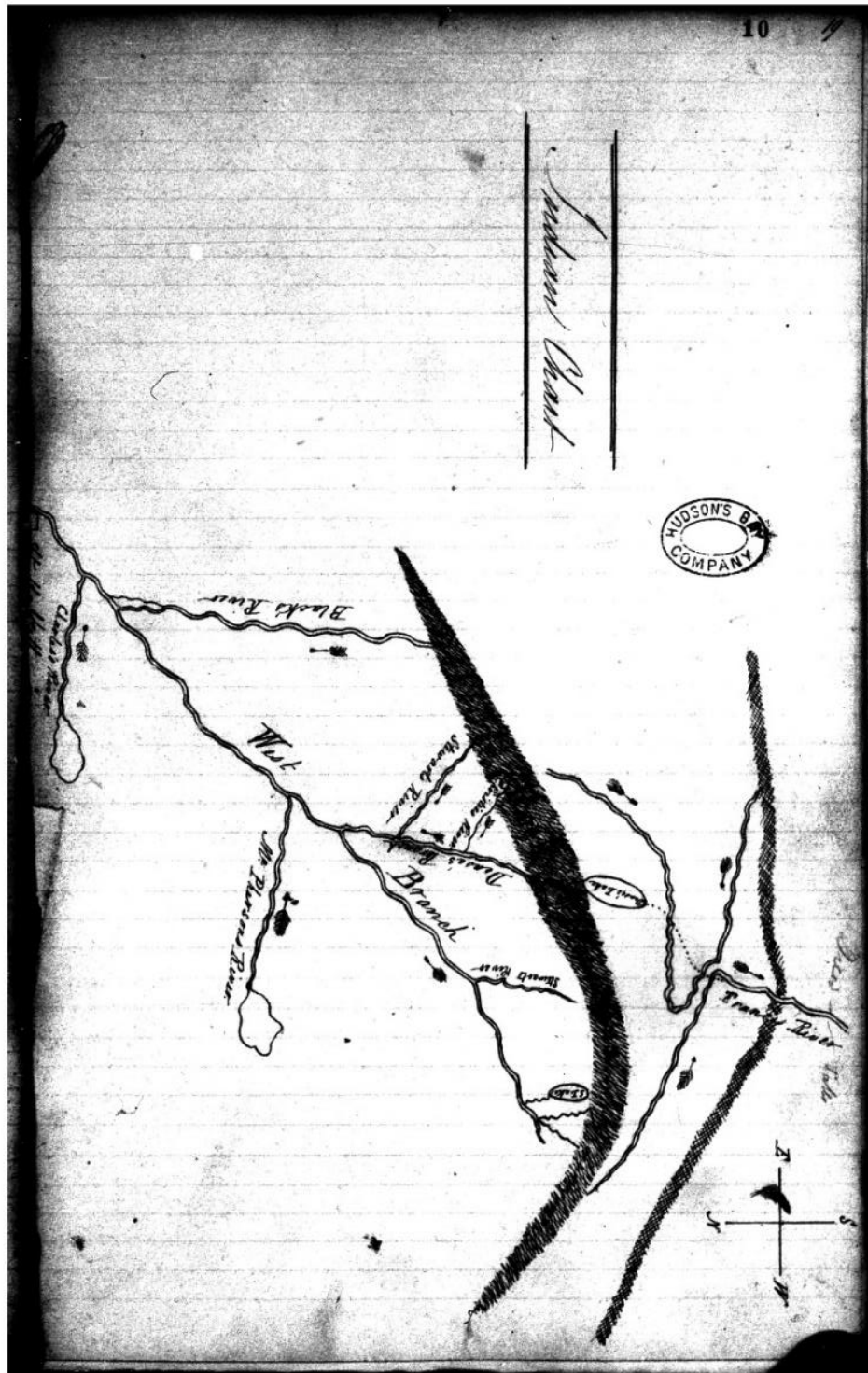
While the journal entry for the day of their encounter indicates the group's familiarity with the region, McLeod's epilogue at the conclusion of the journal contains information into the extent and limitations of their geographical knowledge. While the 'Grassy Indians' provided details of the waterways and terrain extending to the Pacific Ocean, there was an important caveat to this information. In describing the country bordering the Pacific Ocean, McLeod noted, "they however do not affirm this from their own observation but have been led so to understand by the Nahany Indians, their own knowledge of that part of the Country extends no farther than Thomas's Falls."¹³⁰ The epilogue also highlights the ways in which seasonality affected the movements of Indigenous peoples in the region, and consequently, inhibited the chances of McLeod's party encountering other Indigenous groups. Finally, this epilogue provided information into the changing nature of middleman trading networks. McLeod had learned from the 'Grassy Tribe' that they had once traded with the "Babine Indians of New Caledonia" but had since resorted to trading with the Tahltan.¹³¹

Similar to his previous expedition up the Liard River, McLeod provided a sketch map detailing his 1834 travels. Ironically, while the map of his 1834 journey was labeled "Indian Chart," unlike the map he produced in 1831, McLeod did not record the locations of Indigenous groups. Rather, he restricted the map's features to rivers, lakes, mountains, and the trail that he had used to cross from the Dease River to Stikine River watershed (Figure 1-2).

¹³⁰ HBCA, B. 85/a/6, fol. 8d-9.

¹³¹ HBCA, B.85/a/6, fol. 9.

Figure 1-2: Indian Chart¹³²



¹³² HBCA, B.85/a/6, fol. 10.

HBC explorers ventured further into Kaska territory in 1840, when employee Robert Campbell ascended the Frances River to Frances Lake and portaged into the Pelly River watershed. This journey will not be discussed in great detail as Campbell's travel narrative is relatively sparse in comparison to Black and McLeod's respective narratives. Campbell undertook his journey in order to determine the source of the Colville River, which flows into the Arctic Ocean. During his ascent of the Frances River, he noted the abundance of beaver and other types of wildlife.¹³³ In spite of Campbell's vigilance, however, he neither encountered nor saw any signs of Indigenous peoples during his exploration. Upon his return to Fort Halkett in September 1840, Campbell commented on his failure to contact any Indigenous peoples: "We now returned down stream to Fort Halkett, which we reached about the middle of Sept. with our canoe loaded with provisions. We saw not Indians, nor trace of them during the entire trip."¹³⁴ Campbell and the HBC would learn much more about the inhabitants of the Frances Lake and upper Pelly River regions with the establishment of Frances Lake Post and Pelly Banks in 1842 and 1845, respectively.

Conclusion

The ethnographic information produced by the explorers represented the HBC's attempts to produce a type of corporate knowledge. During these explorations, company employees were trying to ascertain the extent to which the Russian trade extended into the subarctic interior. Moreover, they endeavoured to understand Indigenous band affiliations as they related to existing trade networks. Finally, the explorers wished to determine the extent of the furbearer population, large animal population, and fishing lakes in order to further assess the feasibility of establishing trading posts. In this respect, one of the primary lenses through which explorers viewed Indigenous

¹³³ Robert Campbell, *Robert Campbell's Fur Trade Journals, 1808 to 1853*, ed., John W. Todd, Jr., (Seattle, Washington: 1958), 57-58.

¹³⁴ Campbell, *Robert Campbell's Fur Trade Journals*, 60.

land use and occupancy was through that of commercial interests. However, there were other circumstances beyond corporate knowledge that informed the ways in which these explorers viewed the lands they passed through and the Indigenous peoples that they encountered.

The subarctic geography further influenced how the traders travelled through the land and the encounters (or sometimes lack thereof) that they would have with Indigenous peoples. These geographical factors were compounded by seasonal factors which affected the explorers' preferences for river travel. Meanwhile, many of the Indigenous peoples of the Liard River watershed and adjacent watersheds preferred to travel overland. These factors combined to influence who the HBC explorers encountered during their travels and what they learned. The Indigenous peoples met by the explorers, in turn, shaped the knowledge that was reproduced in exploration narratives. In this respect, each individual group met by explorers such as John McLeod exercised a degree of influence over how they were represented in the narratives in a manner similar to Pratt's concept of 'autoethnography.' However, this aspect of self-representation had its limits as Indigenous groups who were not encountered by the explorer were represented by their Indigenous neighbours. Consequently, commercial interests, geography, seasonality, and Indigenous knowledge interacted to shape HBC explorers' perspectives of Indigenous land use in the subarctic Yukon-BC borderlands. In the wake of these expeditions, the HBC established a network of trading posts.

CHAPTER TWO: “Not a Word of Indians”: The View from the Trading Post and Perceptions of the Kaska

As the HBC established trading posts in the wake of exploration, they continued to gather information on Kaska land use and occupancy. The fixed location of trading posts shaped what the company learned about Indigenous peoples. These perspectives, however, were not limited to the post. Activities happened *around* the trading posts. Each fort acted as a metropolis for knowledge production. But knowledge generated at the trading posts was distinct from the ethnographic knowledge acquired through exploration. The view from the trading post was limited by its fixed location. Traders consequently developed a more intimate perspective of a specific region. However, it also meant that traders were often awaiting the arrivals of Indigenous peoples, rather than seeking them out. Moreover, the occupation of a trading post was maintained throughout the year. Unlike exploration, then, the knowledge produced was not limited to the summer. Finally, traders needed to *live* on the land surrounding them. Deriving a livelihood from the environment meant locating fishing lakes and hunting sites and obtaining provisions from Indigenous peoples. To live on the land meant learning about fishing lakes and hunting sites from local Indigenous peoples and hiring them as post hunters. Transportation networks emerged between these various sites and the trading posts in order to sustain the posts.¹ These exchanges facilitated the transmission of local knowledge and information on land use and occupancy. However, even as HBC employees traded for provisions with Indigenous peoples and established their own provisioning outposts, starvation frequently occurred at the posts. In 1849 at Pelly Banks, for example, starvation had become so severe that some individuals resorted to cannibalism.² This

¹ In *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905*, (Markham: Fifth House, 2016), 398-399, Bill Waiser describes the importance of regional transportation networks to sustaining trading posts in northern Saskatchewan.

² Heather Tompkins, “Historical Climatology of the Southern Yukon: Paleoclimatic Reconstruction using Documentary Sources from 1842-1852,” MS Thesis, Queen’s University, 2006, 6.

situation contrasts the consequences of the fixed location nature of the trading posts versus the mobility of the Kaska.

Exploration was undertaken to assess the feasibility of establishing trading posts. Naturally, following the journeys of HBC explorers, trading posts extended into the hunting and trapping territories of the Kaska. The first post established among the Kaska was Fort Halkett. The fort was initially established in the Fort Nelson River watershed. This location was on the periphery of Kaska territory and attracted the Sekanni. Following John McLeod's exploration up the West Branch,³ the post was relocated to the confluence of the Liard and Smith Rivers in 1833. This move situated Fort Halkett beyond the typical haunts of the Sekanni into that of the Kaska. The HBC trading post network extended deeper into the Kaska's territory in 1842 with the establishment of Fort Frances on Frances Lake. The company then established its northernmost presence among the Kaska with the establishment of Pelly Banks on the upper reaches of the Pelly River in 1845.

Trading With the "Sandy People": Fort Halkett on the Edge of Kaska Territory

On 20 July 1829, a party of HBC employees under the leadership of Clerk John Hutchison arrived on the banks of the 'Buffaloe River' – a tributary to the Fort Nelson River – to establish Fort Halkett.⁴ Four days later, they were greeted by a party of Sekanni:

At 2 P.M. ten men of the Theckanny tribe cast up on the opposite shore, sent 2 men to cross them, and on their arrival at this side, found their two leaders were of the party.– Had some conversation with them on the eligibility [sic] of the Spot we had chosen for the establishment, and with which they Seemed perfectly satisfied. [T]hey state that Animals are numerous on both sides of the River.- Received from them a small quantity of fresh and pounded meat[,] 2 Beaver Skins[,] 1 Bearskin, and 5 Mooseskins.⁵

³ The West Brach refers to the Liard River above its confluence with Fort Liard River.

⁴ Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA), Fort Halkett Post Journal, B.85/a/1, fol. 2; Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 88.

⁵ HBCA, B.85/a/1, 24 July 1824, fol. 2d.

The HBC conferred with Indigenous peoples to ascertain the suitability of respective locales for trading posts and, in turn, acquired information on Indigenous land use in the vicinity.

The Sekanni became the primary traders at Fort Halkett's initial site. However, the region surrounding the fort was host to the hunting, trapping, and fishing activities of other Indigenous groups. These groups included the Acho Dene Koe from the Fort Liard and Chipewyan who supplied provisions to the newly-established fort. Moreover, the 'murderers of St. John's,' who had killed a number of HBC men at Fort St. John in 1823, began to frequent the region in 1829.⁶ The establishment of Fort Halkett likely led to the presence of some (if not all) of these groups.

The fort also attracted Athapaskans west of the trading post. During 1830, numerous arrivals of the 'Sandy People' were recorded in the Fort Halkett post journal. The first record of the 'Sandy People' arriving at the fort appeared on 9 June 1830: "Late in the evening two Indians arrived from the opposite shore. [T]hey proved to be strangers belonging to the small tribe of Thekannies called the 'Sandy People,' and came from the West branch in search of the Fort, having left their families and property at some distance."⁷ This encounter with the 'Sandy People' occurred before John McLeod's 1831 visit to their hunting and trapping territories and likely informed the explorer's assessment of the band. While the 'Sandy People' who arrived at Fort Halkett were identified as Sekannie (Thekannies) in the post journal, it is likely that they represented the easternmost Kaska along the Liard River.⁸ However, this designation as Sekanni

⁶ HBCA, B.85/a/1, 24 October 1829, fol. 7d, contains the first reference to the "Murderers of St. John[']s." The rumour of their presence in the vicinity of Fort Halkett appears to have heightened the vigilance of the HBC employees resulting in numerous subsequent references to the 'murderers of St. John's.' For example, HBCA, Fort Halkett post journal, B.85/a/2, 5 June 1830, fol. 2, mentions the presence of the "Murderers of St. John's" at a fishing lake near the fort. On 11 October 1830, the HBC employees at Fort Halkett met one of the murderers in a tense yet peaceful encounter (fol. 8). For more on this topic see: Shepard Krech III, "The Beaver Indians and the Hostilities at Fort St. John's," *Arctic Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (1983): 35-45 and K.R. Fladmark, "Early Fur-trade Posts of the Peace River Area of British Columbia," *BC Studies* 65 (Spring 1985): 48-65.

⁷ HBCA, Fort Halkett post journal, B.85/a/2, 9 June 1830.

⁸ The 'Sandy People' appear to arrive from a region delineated by John Honigsmann in *the Kaska Indians*, 10, as the territory of the Tse'lona or 'Nelson Indians.' According to the anthropologist, the Tse'lona are an eastern branch of

might also indicate fluidity in Athapaskan ethnic identities. The ‘Sandy Indians’ were recorded in the Fort Halkett post journals again on 21 July and 3 October 1830.⁹

Interaction with ‘Sandy People’ at Fort Halkett was not the only means by which the HBC acquired information about the West Branch, its environment, and its residents. Some of the Indigenous groups who had migrated westward to establish themselves around Fort Halkett hunted and trapped along the West Branch and then reported back to the post. During 1831 and 1832, Fort Halkett received numerous arrivals of Indigenous peoples (mostly Chipewyan [or Dene], but sometimes Sekanni) from the West Branch. For example, on 19 October 1830, one Chipewyan individual departed from Fort Halkett to accompany a party of Sekanni to the West Branch.¹⁰ This venture proved abortive as the Chipewyan individual returned to the post on 30 March 1831 having been abandoned by his Sekanni guides. This ordeal was described in the post journal:

This morning two young men arrived from the opposite shore. [T]hey came for Ammunition from the Camp of the Chipewyan /L’Anglois/ who went in the direction of the West branch last Fall to hunt Beaver, accompanied by a part of Theckannies who were to have guided him there, but who deserted him previous to his arrival at the Beaver Country which obliged him to retrace his steps backwards, and consequently Starved, being in a Country he was unacquainted with.- I never had much dependence [sic] to place upon the promise of a Theckannay. [B]ut now much less.¹¹

The HBC’s account of L’Anglois’ return to the post provides cautionary insights into analyzing the information that filtered from the West Branch to the traders at Fort Halkett. First, L’Anglois’ abandonment by the Sekanni demonstrated interethnic tensions between different Athapaskan groups in the region. Moreover, the HBC’s rendering of his experience highlighted the

the Kaska. However, there is no consensus within the subarctic fur trade historiography that the ‘Sandy People’ are Kaska. Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration*, 100, suggests that they are Kaska. However, J.C. Yerbury, *The Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade, 1680-1860*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 113, suggests that the ‘Sandy People’ are Sekanni.

⁹ HBCA, B.85/a/2, 21 July 1830, fol. 4; 3 October 1830, fol. 7.

¹⁰ HBCA, B.85/a/2, 19 October 1830, fol. 8d.

¹¹ HBCA, B.85/a/2, 30 March 1831, fol. 15.

Chipewyan's lack of familiarity with the country. This degree of detail of Chipewyan travels to the West Branch was not always present when assessing nature's abundance in that region.

Many subsequent West Branch reports focused on starvation. On 4 May 1831, it was recorded in the Fort Halkett post journal: "four Indians cast up from the opposite shore. [T]hey belong to the party who were to have gone in the direction of West branch, and State that Starvation oblidged [sic] them to abandon their intended course."¹² During the following winter, the residents of Fort Halkett received a letter from Fort Liard which discussed Chipewyan starvation on the West Branch: "I am sorry to state that the party of Chipwayans [sic] belonging to Peace River, who left this place last Fall to go in the direction of the West Branch, have nearly all perished through famine, only a few of them having reached Fort de Liard with their meloncholy tidings."¹³ These reports from the West Branch reflect the ways in which a trading post could become a metropolis of knowledge production. The post was in a fixed location. However, Indigenous peoples venturing beyond the immediate vicinity of the fort returned with information. While these reports from the West Branch did not provide meaningful insights into Indigenous occupancy of the West Branch (beyond Sekanni familiarity with the region – as evidenced by their ambivalent role as guides to the Chipewyan), they presented an environment where subsistence was meagre.

Relocating Fort Halkett to the West Branch

In spite of the reports of starvation on the West Branch, the HBC decided to relocate Fort Halkett to the West Branch's confluence with the Smith River in 1833. Once again, the HBC was dependent on Indigenous knowledge to determine the suitability of the site as a viable trading post. As there was an absence of Indigenous peoples present when the post was being established, HBC employees needed to read the landscape for evidence of subsistence activities in the region:

¹² HBCA, B.85/a/2, 4 April 1831, fol. 15.

¹³ HBCA, B.85/a/3, 8 March 1832, fol. 18.

One of my Hunters who took his departure this morning returned towards evening, but during his ramble had no success, he informs me that at no considerable distance on the opposite Shore there is a Lake of some magnitude in which he is certain there must be Fish. And what convinces him Strongly in that idea is from some of the Indian Habitations near its margin, where he supposes some of the Natives at certain season resort for the purpose of Fishing.¹⁴

When two Sekanni arrived at the new establishment on 6 August, they talked with the traders about the location. Chief trader John McLeod wrote, "I am convinced the means of Subsistence will be with more difficulty procured, than up Smiths River the site of the Establishment is a more Central Situation for the Natives of this quarter, and therefore resolve to weather out the Campaign."¹⁵

Local Indigenous peoples' arrived at the new Fort Halkett on 9 August 1833 and offered their opinion on the company's chances of subsisting in the region. The local population was not optimistic:

In the afternoon three of the Natives in our vicinity made their appearance the first who Cast up since our arrival in this quarter, they slept Five Nights from their Camp and brought 22 Beaver and a few lbs Grease, but no other provisions of any description; regarding the Country in our vicinity, and its resources I made particular inquiry, but from what Cause Could obtain no satisfactory information, they however represent the Country poor in Large Animals, and says that from our own exersions [sic] form the Fish Lake we can expect only to subsist, and from there any support we cannot expect, they have the greatest difficulty in procuring a livelyhood [sic] for themselves, particularly during Winter.¹⁶

On the following day, the three arrivals rafted across the West Branch to join their families on the south side.¹⁷ The HBC employees faced a precarious situation, and like Indigenous peoples, would have to survive on fish to make it through the winter. On 21 October 1833, the chief trader asked about the nearest fishing lake: "Having heard from some of the Indians that a Small Lake in our

¹⁴ HBCA, Fort Halkett post journal, B.85/a/4, 3 August 1833, fol. 2. For more on reading 'indexical signs' in the landscape see Turkel's *The Archive of Place*.

¹⁵ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 6 August 1833, fol. 2d.

¹⁶ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 9 August 1833, fol. 3.

¹⁷ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 10 August 1833, fol. 3d.

vicinity produced fish Large and of excellent quality, to ascertain the fact I sent of Hool [sic] in company with an Indian.”¹⁸

Fort Halkett’s post journals are replete with references to the successes and failures of the fisheries. On 14 October, thirty-eight men with their families visited the fort and expressed concern that the HBC would be unable to subsist on the local environment.¹⁹ The natural limitation of the country immediately surrounding the confluence of the Smith and Liard Rivers meant that HBC traders would need to develop an extended subsistence hinterland.²⁰ The freighting of provisions from hunting camps and fishing lakes to Fort Halkett thereafter contributed to shaping the HBC’s understandings of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous land use. It should be noted, however, that while many of the fur trading records primarily focus on Indigenous men bringing provisions to the trading posts, much of the labour around this provisions trade was provided by women.²¹ The androcentric nature of fur trade records have obscured this fact.

With these extended periods of isolation, especially during the winter, the HBC depended on information from the arrivals of Indigenous peoples. The knowledge gathered at the post was used to try to reconstruct the world around them. In conversation with the new arrivals – as mediated through an interpreter – fur traders learned about a respective band’s activities (both in the pursuit of furs and provisions), their relations, and the interrelationships between various bands. All of this information was vital to the maintenance of the fur trade.

Shortly after the establishment of the new Fort Halkett, fishing and hunting camps were established to supply the traders and their dogs. Various groups of people were employed to hunt

¹⁸ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 21 October 1833, fol. 8.

¹⁹ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 14 October 1833, fol. 7d.

²⁰ In “‘Victuals to Put into our Mouths’: Environmental Perspectives on Fur Trade Provisioning Activities at Cumberland House, 1775-1782,” in *The Early Northwest*, ed., Gregory P. Marchildon, (Regina: University of Regina Press, Canadian Plains Research Center, 2008), 125-146, George Colpitts describes Cumberland House and the geographical expansion of the provisions trade.

²¹ Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 398.

for the trading post including Métis, Indigenous peoples from other posts, and local Indigenous peoples. These camps proved particularly crucial during the winter months. Reports of privation over the winter appear frequently in the post journals. For example, on 17 March 1834, it was recorded in the Fort Halkett journal that, “The last morsal [sic] of provisions in store was served out, which only served for a scanty meal for the people, and the only substitute [sic] now remaining is about a keg of rough Barley.”²² Two years later, describing the hardships faced by the fort hunters, it was recorded in the post journal that, “In the evening two of our hunters who have been absence since the Month of December arrived. [T]hey suffered from starvation since that time. [B]ut lately they succeeded in killing 14 Animals, part of which they have dried & put in Security for us.”²³ Beyond demonstrating hardships faced by HBC employees during the winter, this excerpt highlights the long journeys that hunters undertook in the pursuit of provisions. During hunting excursions and while in fishing camps, fort hunters sometimes encountered local Indigenous peoples and gained information about subsistence practices beyond the trading post.²⁴ This information was sometimes relayed to Fort Halkett.

The HBC posts hired Indigenous hunters to provide provisions to the posts. Some were local people, while others were hired from more established posts to hunt for newly established posts. At the new Fort Halkett, Sekanni were hired to hunt for the post. It is likely that these Sekanni had previously traded at the old Fort Halkett. On 12 November 1833, a party of Sekanni hunters arrived at the fort. After describing their lack of hunting success, the Sekanni related information on the location of other Indigenous groups and their trapping successes: “by them I

²² HBCA, B.85/a/4, 17 March 1834, fol. 21,

²³ HBCA, B.85/a/7, 16 March 1834, fol. 13d.

²⁴ It should also be noted that sometime local Indigenous peoples were hired to hunt for the HBC. It was not uncommon for the HBC to hire local Indigenous hunters to complement the Indigenous hunters who were hired from other posts, such as Fort Liard.

had news of the Moyan Chefae and others who left me at same date [18 October 1833] with themselves, they were on the margin of Black River [now known as Kechika River], and had Collectively about 40 Beavers.”²⁵

Sometimes the HBC learned more about Indigenous land use through competition for resources. On 22 May 1834, two men from the post visited their fishery. Upon their return to the fort they reported tensions between the post fisherman and the local Indigenous population:

[T]he fisherman Complains much of the Number of Starving Indians about the Station, and inspite [sic] of all vigilance comments depredations in course of the Night, and some of the party pilfered in course of yesterday one of his Nets; on receiving the information I despatched the Interpreter to their Camp, and after some hesitation and not before punishment was threatened could the thief be discovered, and after receiving a sound flogging obliged to restore our property.²⁶

While the specific Indigenous group encountered at the fishery was not identified, this incident nevertheless demonstrates that at least one group fished in the region during the spring. The conflict between the fisherman and the Indigenous peoples may also indicate that the HBC presence at Fort Halkett was an added stress on the region’s wildlife resources. Significantly, in spite of the presence of fishing lakes in the vicinity of the post, there were few encounters with Indigenous peoples over the course of most winters. In fact, on 17 February 1835 it was recorded in the post journal that no Indigenous peoples were expected to arrive until the opening of river navigation.²⁷ Fort hunters also drew attention to how environmental fluctuations affected Indigenous subsistence activities. For example, when three hunters returned to Fort Halkett after hunting up Smith River they reported, “that the Indians in that quarter are starving. [T]he country being overflowed with Water.”²⁸

²⁵ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 12 November 1834, fol. 10.

²⁶ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 22 May 1834, fol. 26d.

²⁷ HBCA, B.85/a/5, 17 February 1834, fol. 14d.

²⁸ HBCA, B.85/a/7, 27 May 1836, fol. 19.

There was one final way in which the provisions trade provided the traders at Fort Halkett with information about Indigenous land use patterns. Entire bands would devote themselves to provisions hunting. These hunts were undertaken both for the post and the bands, respectively. On 7 June 1834, Moyan Chefae's band departed from the post to undertake a provisions hunt in the Toad River region.²⁹ As the band departed to make its provisions hunt, they told the traders where they planned on hunting. In September, three envoys from the band returned to Fort Halkett and informed the traders of their hunting activities and location: "Since they left the Establishment in June, have loitered their time in the Mountains in direction of Old Fort Halkett, without making either furs or provisions."³⁰ Moreover, the recent arrivals informed the traders that the bands were dispersing into smaller groups to hunt.³¹

Indigenous arrivals to Fort Halkett brought information from distant regions to the HBC employees. Fur traders, found themselves isolated from many of the Indigenous activities in the region, particularly during the winter. While there was some venturing beyond the post for provisions, wood, and to deliver news between trading posts, the perspectives of the traders was generally limited to the vicinity of the post. For example, on 17 February 1835, the person in charge of Fort Halkett returned to the post after having travelled to Fort Simpson. Upon his return, the Chief Trader observed that no Indigenous peoples had arrived at the fort since his departure on 13 December 1834. Moreover, he stated that he did not expect any arrivals until the opening of navigation.³²

While visiting Fort Halkett, Indigenous peoples informed the Chief Trader of their activities. Often such news was learned from the Indigenous peoples as they prepared for their

²⁹ HBCA, B.85/a/5, 7 June 1834, fol. 2d.

³⁰ HBCA, B.85/a/5, 20 September 1834, fol. 7d.

³¹ HBCA, B.85/a/5, 22 September 1834, fol. 7d.

³² HBCA, B.85/a/5, 17 February 1835, fol. 14d-15.

departure from the post. For example, on 10 August 1833, it was recorded in the post journal that, “The Indians who arrived yesterday having the few Furs they brought erected a raft and by noon took their departure, they proceeded a few hours down Stream, and then proceeded across land to join their Families who they had left some distance South Side of West Branch.”³³ During the following spring, the post journal noted the arrival and quick departure of two individuals on their first trading excursion to Fort Halkett. In addition to identifying that these individuals were new traders to the establishment, the HBC employees learned that they were related to people who had previously visited the fort. Moreover, the traders learned where the new arrivals’ families resorted to during springtime:

In the forenoon Two Indians made their appearance, who for the first time visited the Establishment, they were of the same Tribe as those who paid me a visit in the Autumn, brought 17 Beaver and 6 Martins, which they traded for a Steel Trap and Amunition [sic], they took their departure towards evening to join their Families who they left six days march up Blacks River.³⁴

By such means, the HBC learned about the seasonal movements of the Indigenous peoples inhabiting the West Branch, in particular trade and provision potential. On 31 January 1834, the chief trader reported, “I have now given up all hope of seeing any The’Kennie Hunters cast up, they must be either dead or have steered their course to joint their Relations who passes the Winter in the heghts [sic] of Blacks River, if such be the Case, my whole dependence rests on the Success of my Slave Hunters, and if unfortunately they should fail nothing can be expected but the greatest privations to be our lot.”³⁵

As different Athapaskan traders arrived at and departed from the post, traders made distinctions between different groups. These distinctions were drawn along various lines. One

³³ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 10 August 1833, fol. 3d.

³⁴ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 27 April 1834, fol. 24d.

³⁵ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 31 January 1834, fol. 17.

significant division was known Indigenous peoples who had already established a trading relationship with the HBC versus ‘strangers.’ On 14 October 1835, a party of Indigenous peoples arrived on the opposite shore of the West Branch from Fort Halkett. As ice was running in the river at that point, the HBC employees were only able to take six members of the party across the river.³⁶ On the following day, as the ice cleared from the river above the post, the remainder of the party crossed to the post. It was recorded in the post journal that “two of the party are Strangers, this being their first visit to the Establishment.”³⁷ In 1841, this designation was used to identify the arrival of an individual from Frances Lake who had never seen a European before: “Late in the evening Colville with three other lads of the Gens grand d’eau arrived from the upper Country the vicinity of Frances Lake. One of them never saw a Fort or ‘White’ till this evening the other two lads were here for the first time last Nov^{br} the Stranger says that he has a cache of Furs at Finlaysons’ Lake.”³⁸ Prior to relocating Fort Halkett to the West Branch, the ‘Sandy Indians’ who visited the old fort were referred to as ‘strangers’ on their initial visit.³⁹

Knowledge produced at the trading posts complimented and expanded information secured during exploration. As Indigenous peoples arrived at Fort Halkett, they were sometimes referred to according to designations that had been developed during earlier explorations of the region. For example, on 7 November 1834, “Nine Indians made their appearance, for the first time visited the Establishment, they are from the Country North of the West Branch, denominated (Thlo et chose) or Medow [sic] Indians.”⁴⁰ The Thlo et Chosse McLeod had met during his first ascent of the West Branch in 1831.⁴¹

³⁶ HBCA, B.85/a/7, 23 October 1835, fol. 4.

³⁷ HBCA, B.85/a/7, 24 October 1835, fol. 4.

³⁸ HBCA, B.85/a/10, 12 May 1841, fol. 32.

³⁹ HBCA, B.85/a/2, 9 June 1830, fol. 2d.

⁴⁰ HBCA, B.85/a/5, 7 November 1834, fol. 11.

⁴¹ HBCA, B.200/a/14, 24 July 1831, fol. 6.

As the HBC differentiated the bands that arrived at Fort Halkett, various nuanced understandings of band affiliations emerged. Sometimes, broader generalizations were made. Other times, HBC traders provided more specific ethnographic descriptions. Even after Fort Halkett was relocated to the West Branch, there were many references to the Sekanni (The 'Kinnie) in the post journals. Some of these references discussed the Sekanni hunting for the fort.⁴² Other references to the Sekanni noted their trading activities at the fort.⁴³ Finally, the post journals also discuss the loss of some of their former Sekanni traders who chose to trade at Dunvegan in the Peace River region.⁴⁴ These references to the Sekanni all represent more generalized understandings of Indigenous groups. Similarly, the Fort Halkett journals contain generalized designations for the Nahanni.⁴⁵

More specific band affiliations were used for local groups that visited the new site of Fort Halkett. The post journals identified the Moyan Chefae and his "followers" and the Father of the Ponder and his "followers."⁴⁶ Of these 'chiefs' (as recognized by the HBC), the Moyan Chefae – also sometimes referred to as the 'Little Chief' – appeared most often in the post journals. The comings and goings of Moyan Chefae and his followers were meticulously recorded by the HBC at Fort Halkett. On 19 May 1834, for example, McLeod noted the arrival of two people from the Moyan Chefae's camp, bringing provisions and furs. Upon their departure the following day, the Chief Trader stated that he did not expect to hear from the Moyan Chefae and his followers until 5 June, when they were expected to trade for supplies for their summer provisions hunt.⁴⁷ Sure

⁴² HBCA, B.85/a/4, 12 November 1833, fol. 10.

⁴³ HBCA, B.85/a/5, 13 November 1834, fol. 12.

⁴⁴ HBCA, B.85/a/5, 31 October 1834, fol. 10d.

⁴⁵ HBCA, B.85/a/5, 15 November 1834, fol. 12. In this instance, the use of the term 'Nahany' is likely in reference to the Tahltan who operated as middlemen between the Tlingit trading on the Pacific coast and other Athapaskans in the interior.

⁴⁶ The Moyan Chefae is first mentioned in the Fort Halkett post journal at HBCA, B.85/a/4, 8 August 1833, fol. 3. The Father of the Ponder is mentioned in the post journal at HBCA, B.85/a/4, 24 May 1834, fol. 24d.

⁴⁷ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 19-20 May 1834, fol. 26d.

enough, on 5 June the Moyan Chefae and some of his followers arrived at Fort Halkett with beaver pelts to trade. The band departed from the fort on 7 June to undertake the provisions hunt.⁴⁸

In addition to recording the arrivals and departures of the Moyan Chefae and his party, the HBC took measures to ascertain where the band was located at certain times of the year. When Moyan Chefae (in this instance referred to as the 'Little Chief') and his party arrived at Fort Halkett on 15 May 1835, the chief trader commented that they had spent the winter near the site of old Fort Halkett. The post journal made a distinction between the Moyan Chefae and his followers and the Sekanni, who had spent the winter in the same place:

The Little Chief and followers made their appearance in Number 14 Men with their families, but from the appearance of their parcels their Winter hunts is but trifling- The Little Chief having passed the Winter in the vicinity of old Fort Halkett passed some time in Company with the The'Kennies who formerly resorted to that Establishment, but at present Trade at Dunvegan Peace River, where if report can be credited, the encouragement held out to them by the Gentleman at that Establishment is far from corresponding with the Company's regulations in regard to Indians from one Post resorting to another.⁴⁹

As groups – such as the Moyan Chefae and his followers – arrived and departed from Fort Halkett, they provided information about their seasonal movements.

Indigenous peoples frequenting Fort Halkett also provided information about the interrelationships between Indigenous groups beyond the post. Sometimes the HBC traders learned about trading relationships extending beyond the post. These trading relationships had the potential to either bring more furs to the HBC or whisk furs away from the company and into the hands of the Russians. On 8 December 1833, McLeod received the good news of a middleman trading network bringing furs to Fort Halkett:

At an early hour, Seven of the Indians who had paid me a visit in the Autumn made their appearance, their success in fur Hunting has exceeded my most sanguine expectations, having delivered 251 Beaver and 3 Bear Skins, it must however be

⁴⁸ HBCA, B.85/a/5, 5-7 June 1834, fol. 2d.

⁴⁹ HBCA, B.85.a.5, 15 May 1835, fol. 22d.

observed not all their own killing, having traded about 50 Beaver from other Indians who has not visited the Establishment should all the others, be equally successful, I would have fair hopes our first attempt attempt [sic] on these Strage Lands would in some degree repay, the trouble, and many risks we encountered before.⁵⁰

However, the men at Fort Halkett also received reports of furs being transported from the subarctic interior to the Pacific coast. On 16 May 1834, two individuals “from the heights of the West Branch” arrived at the post for the first time. McLeod recorded in his journal that the arrivals typically traded with the “Nahany Indians” (Tahltan), supplied them with goods at a cheaper rate than the HBC.⁵¹ The chief trader proceeded to describe their material wealth: “they were well supplied and the property in their possession in no manner could I find any difference and that supplied by the Company, with this only difference in lue [sic] of Metal Buttons, their Capots had Two rows of Pearl, and their Women who had each a Green 3 point Blanket, a row of Pearl Buttons was affixed round the border.”⁵² The following November, Fort Halkett was visited by three Sekanni who informed the company of more people trading with the Tahltan: “they inform me that the major part of the Indians who visited the Establishment last Autumn and Spring, are at or in the vicinity of their Camp [on the upper part of Kechika River], but that during the latter part of Summer whatever Furs they had made, was traded by the Nahany Indians, who brought them Ample supplies from West of the Mountains.”⁵³

Traders at Fort Halkett also learned about tensions between Indigenous groups. Some of these tensions emerged out of the expansion of the fur trade up the Liard River. The provisions hunters who travelled up the river from previously established posts – such as Fort Liard – did not

⁵⁰ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 8 December 1833, fol. 12d.

⁵¹ HBCA, B.85/a/4, 16 May 1834, fol. 26.

⁵² HBCA, B.85/a/4, 16 May 1834, fol. 26.

⁵³ HBCA, B.85/a/5, 13 November 1834, fol. 12.

always enjoy a harmonious relationship with the local Indigenous peoples. These tensions were reported to the HBC employees at Fort Halkett on 13 April 1836:

Early this morning one of our hunters (a Native of Fort de Liard) arrived with the tongue of a Male Moose he has killed quite close to the Fort. [H]e states that the Indians who left this on the 10th Instant passed at the camp on their way to the Fort and threatened their lives. [O]n their return from hence they endeavoured to pillage their property. [A]nd he has no doubt that they would have put either of their threats into execution had not our hunters rose camp from where they first met and came within a short distance of the Fort. [I]n so doing he is of opinion that they frustrated the designs of those evil inclined and cowardly people. It is however fortunate for us that nothing serious occurred, as we would never have succeeded in keeping any longer the Indians of Fort de Liard about us. [A]nd on whom our sole support has depended since the erection of this Establishment.⁵⁴

Understanding the tensions between Indigenous peoples beyond the walls of the fort was integral to maintaining its survival and the economic success of the trade.

Arrivals at Fort Halkett also brought rumours of warfare among Indigenous groups. On 4 May 1836, it was recorded that warfare had inhibited the fur trapping activities of some Indigenous peoples:

They would have made much better fur hunts had not rumours [sic] of a War part being in search of them came to their Ears. [T]he fear created by these false reports drove them at an early season from a spot where Martins were plentiful. and [sic] where they intended to have remained till Spring.⁵⁵

While the people who had allegedly threatened war is unclear, those who were on the receiving end of this threat were a party of Indigenous peoples from the West Branch region and some people from Bear Lake who had accompanied them.⁵⁶ This rumour of war sheds light on the relations between various Indigenous groups in the region as well as how potential conflict affected land use and wildlife harvesting activities. Rumours reaching Fort Halkett also highlights the challenges of knowledge production at the fixed location nature of the post. The HBC was dependent on

⁵⁴ HBCA, B.85/a/7, 13 April 1836, fol. 15d.

⁵⁵ HBCA, B.85/a/7, 4 May 1836, fol. 17d.

⁵⁶ HBCA, B.85/a/7, 22 April 1836, fol. 16d.

reports from their hunters and Indigenous traders to gain an understanding of interactions between Indigenous groups in the country beyond the log structures.

The View from Frances Lake Post and Pelly Banks

Following Robert Campbell's exploration of Frances River (a tributary to the Liard River), the HBC established a trading post at Frances Lake. While a cabin had been erected on the shores of the lake in 1840 during Campbell's voyage,⁵⁷ Campbell established the trading post in 1842. Similar to Fort Halkett and other subarctic trading posts, Frances Lake Post was heavily dependent on the surrounding environment to sustain it through the winter. There was consequently a large degree of travelling between the new post and fishing and hunting camps. Frances Lake is a long and narrow lake containing three arms, roughly forming an inverted 'h.' The lake contains many narrows (referred to in the post journals as *detroit* a French term). These narrows were popular fishing sites for the HBC.⁵⁸ The HBC also established a fishery at Finlayson Lake. Meanwhile, hunters for Frances Lake Post hunted beyond the mountains surrounding the lake. Finally, the post also employed "Indian trippers" to seek out furs.⁵⁹ All of these activities emanating from the post served as sources of information between the 'hinterland' and the post.

The importance of hunting excursions in making connections with the local Indigenous population became clear to the fort's occupants from the beginning. While Campbell and his party reached the site of the new post on 12 August 1842,⁶⁰ few Indigenous peoples arrived for the first month-and-a-half. On 31 August, Campbell recorded the arrival of "Two of the lads we met at the Forks on the way up."⁶¹ In late September, he recorded the arrival of the "first Stranger" who had

⁵⁷ This cabin is referred to in HBCA, B.73/a/1, Frances Lake Post Journal, 12 August 1842, fol. 6.

⁵⁸ For example, see HBCA, B.73/a/1, 15 September 1842, fol. 9.

⁵⁹ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 8 October 1842.

⁶⁰ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 12 August 1842, fol. 6.

⁶¹ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 31 August 1842, fol. 8.

“cast up from below.”⁶² Other than these two arrivals, Frances Lake Post saw few Indigenous peoples.⁶³

On 29 September, two hunters – Lapie and Gauche – returned to the post after travelling to Finlayson Lake. Bringing with them “a load of meat and some Beaver,” the hunters said they had met a group of Indigenous peoples: “They convey the good tidings of their having seen some of the Natives and glad to learn our being here went off to notify their relations and I hope the news will soon get wings and spread among the different families inhabiting these Wilds.”⁶⁴ On 2 October, Campbell recorded the arrival of ten Indigenous peoples “from below & above” the fort.⁶⁵ Some of these arrivals were the owners of fur packages that the HBC men had found and put in storage upon their arrival at Frances Lake on 16 August.⁶⁶ While Campbell did not mention whether or not the arrivals were the same people, or related to the people met by Lapie and Gauche, it is likely that some of these visitors were the same people encountered by hunters at Finlayson Lake.

Rumours of Indigenous peoples’ hunting successes also prompted the Frances Lake Post employees to depart from the post in search of provisions. For example, in 8 April 1843, Campbell reported that, “Frances and Rennie with their Sleys [sic] took their departure at an early hour they are to proceed on towards Hoole in the hope from the abundance of animals and Indians in that quarter that they will be able to got [sic] a load each.”⁶⁷ Provisions became an all-encompassing worry during winter at the Frances Lake Post, perhaps even more so than at Fort Halkett. It was not uncommon for Campbell to lament their precarious situation and call on Devine Providence to

⁶² HBCA, B.73/a/1, 28 September 1842, fol. 10d.

⁶³ In HBCA, B.73/a/1, 20 September 1842, fol. 9d, Campbell write in the post journal: “not a word of Indians.”

⁶⁴ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 29 September 1842, fol. 10d.

⁶⁵ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 2 October 1842, fol. 11.

⁶⁶ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 16 August 1842, fol. 6d.

⁶⁷ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 8 April 1843, fol. 29d.

save them. On 4 January 1843, after bemoaning the failure of the post hunters to secure provisions for the fort, Campbell wrote: “Thus is truly distressing news to us in our present destitute condition our entire hope for supplies was on the success of our Hunter which has thus vanished. May it please a Gracious Providence to help us who alone can and whom I yet trust will never forsake us.”⁶⁸ Campbell diligently recorded when Indigenous peoples arrived with meat and when they did not. On one occasion, after noting the arrival of four Indigenous peoples “from the river beyond the mountains,” Campbell commented that “They brought us no provision nor has any of the Natives of this vicinage as yet brought any.”⁶⁹ Because of the need for provisions, securing meat and fish became a way for HBC employees to learn about Indigenous land use patterns.

Similar to Fort Halkett, the HBC employees at Frances Lake Post differentiated between various Indigenous groups. These distinctions took a number of forms. The designation of ‘Stranger’ was used to describe arrivals with whom the HBC had not yet established a trading relationship. Campbell also appears to have identified various bands within the Frances Lake region. For example, on 11 November 1842, Campbell mentioned the arrival of an individual from Joli Jeune Homme’s camp.⁷⁰ Later, on 13 March 1843 he noted the arrival of “two Strangers of the Abahueta Tribe.”⁷¹ Possibly using a more general term for the Indigenous peoples around Frances Lake, on 20 July 1843 Campbell referred to a groups called the ‘Gens grand d’eau.’⁷² Significantly, about a century later the anthropologist John Honigmann identified the Frances Lake Kaska as ‘Big Water Dwellers’ (Tu’tcogotena in the Kaska language).⁷³ The term ‘Gens grand d’eau’ was likely a Métis French translation of the Indigenous name. Once again, as information

⁶⁸ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 4 January 1843, fol. 21-21d.

⁶⁹ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 17 December 1842, fol. 19d.

⁷⁰ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 11 November 1842, fol. 15d.

⁷¹ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 13 March 1843, fol. 28.

⁷² HBCA, B.73/a/2, 20 July 1843, fol. 2d.

⁷³ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 20.

was translated from the Kaska language into French, and eventually communicated to English speakers, knowledge became increasingly refracted.

When Indigenous peoples from more distant regions visited the fort, they were generally described according to the region that they came from. Sometimes Campbell's descriptions of the arrivals were vague. When four people arrived at Frances Lake Post on 17 December 1842, Campbell wrote in the journal that they came from "the river beyond the mountains."⁷⁴ The "river beyond the mountains" might be the Pelly River to the north of Frances Lake.⁷⁵ However, the specific river and mountains are unclear. On 12 April 1843, Campbell offered a more (if not entirely) precise description of the region inhabited by recent arrivals. The trader/explorer commented: "in the evening four others arrived with three loaded Sledges they brought from near the Source of the River west Side the Mountains."⁷⁶ This statement might refer to the headwaters of the Little Salmon River. Finally, on 27 January 1844 Campbell noted the arrival of 'Mountain Indians.'⁷⁷ The 'Mountain Indians' arrived at the fort from the mountain range separating the Yukon River watershed from the Mackenzie River watershed. By describing the diverse geographical origins of the arrivals at Frances Lake Post, Campbell demonstrated an understanding – even if somewhat vague – of the hunting and trapping territories of the Indigenous peoples in the region.

Descriptions of where the arrivals at the post came from also shed light on possible extensive pre-existing trading relationships. On 24 January 1843, four Indigenous traders arrived. Campbell recorded their arrival in the post journal: "four Strange Indians arrived who are from

⁷⁴ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 17 December 1842, fol. 19d.

⁷⁵ In HBCA, B.73/a/1, 19 October 1843, fol. 10-10d, Campbell made a more specific reference of the arrival of Indigenous peoples from the upper Pelly River.

⁷⁶ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 12 April 1843, fol. 30.

⁷⁷ HBCA, B.73/a/2, 27 January 1844, fol. 18d.

beyond the mountains and say they are acquainted with the Country to the sea coast.”⁷⁸ The arrivals at the post were likely either Tagish or Tlingit.⁷⁹ Their arrival at Frances Lake may indicate a pre-existing trading relationship between coastal Indigenous peoples and the Frances Lake Kaska.

Arrivals at Frances Lake Post also described the interrelationships between the various Indigenous groups hunting, fishing, trapping, and trading in the region. Soon after the establishment of the fort, Indigenous peoples reported warfare in the vicinity:

The Joli Juene home with another Indian arrived from below and the Thlocoitchosses’ Sons Colvile and Askedele from above with a good quantity of Spliced meat and along with them is a Strange Indian with some of his Family the only survivors [sic] they say of a party who have been massacred lately on the west side the mountain the horrid warfare which is carried on between those contending parties is dreadful.⁸⁰

During the following autumn, the HBC men at the post once again received rumours of warfare in the surrounding country. This rumour was not only a threat to the HBC’s Indigenous trading partners, but also the existence of the fort:

We were cheered today by the arrival of Jose and Colvile with about 60 lb spliced Meat.- but they bring the distressing News that there is still a constant murdering among the Indians – the Step Mother and Brother of the former and the Uncle of the latter have been killed by the Nahanies or some other Indians to the south of us.- and who they report are menacing the Whites also- They also state that the Nahanies were to descend the Dease Branch to interrupt and cut off the Boats on their way up – They say they are constantly in fear of their enemies, and from this Cause are unable to hunt.⁸¹

⁷⁸ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 24 January 1843, fol. 23d.

⁷⁹ In *My Old People Say: An Ethnographic Survey of Southern Yukon Territory*, Vol. 1, Publications in Ethnography, No. 6(1), (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1975), anthropologist Catharine McClellan notes that the Tagish both traded and intermarried with the Indigenous peoples of the Pelly Banks/Ross River region and Frances Lake Kaska (42). In Yukon Archives, Poole Field fonds, 82/164, MSS 12, Poole Field letter to Jack, South Nahanni, 14 July 1939, trader, trapper, and prospector Poole Field as also described interactions between the “Takue Indians” and the inhabitants of the Pelly River region.

⁸⁰ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 21 October 1842, fol. 13d.

⁸¹ HBCA, B.73/a/2, 30 September 1843, fol. 8d.

The ‘Nahanies’ in this passage were the Tahltan who had established trading relationships with the Tlingit. It is likely that they were attacking the Kaska in the Dease River region. Despite concerns about the HBC boats reaching Frances Lake Post, the Outfit arrived on 3 October.⁸²

Sometimes the view from the trading post could be somewhat myopic, resulting in confusion over what was happening beyond its gates. On 15 May 1843, Campbell recorded the arrival of four hunters who brought news of hostilities perpetrated by the Tahltan. They stated that “the Nahanies had Slaughtered our Indian fowl hunters.”⁸³ This news resulted in preparations to defend to fort against attack. Nerves at the post were shortly put to ease by the arrival of two traders who informed the residents that “the firing by our people was the cause of joy and not of war.”⁸⁴

Reports of starvation and disease also reached Frances Lake Post. On 19 November 1843, Campbell recorded in his journal, “Atachactah and Jose’s Wife cast up with Complaints of Hunger.- and how that dreadful malady is raging among them.”⁸⁵ Later that winter a ‘Stranger’ from “beyond Finlayson’s Lake” arrived with news that “The Indians in that quarter are still labouring under the effects of that Malady which spread among them last fall.”⁸⁶ It was not uncommon for Indigenous arrivals at trading posts to recount the hardships they had experienced during the hunting and trapping season. However, it should be noted that some reports of hardship and starvation may have been to secure more advantageous trade terms.⁸⁷ In spite of these reports, the traders at Frances Lake Post likely had a limited perspective on the extent of epidemic diseases and starvation beyond the trading post.

⁸² HBCA, B.73/a/2, 3 October 1843, fol. 9.

⁸³ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 15 May 1843, fol. 33.

⁸⁴ HBCA, B.73/a/1, 15 May 1843, fol. 33.

⁸⁵ HBCA, B.73/a/2, 19 November 1844, fol. 13.

⁸⁶ HBCA, B.73/a/2, 7 January 1844, fol. 17-17d.

⁸⁷ See Mary Black-Rogers, “Varieties of ‘Starving’: Semantics and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade, 1750-1850,” *Ethnohistory* 33, no. 4 (Autumn 1986): 353-383.

In 1845, the HBC extended their trading network to the Pelly River with the establishment of Pelly Banks. While also under the oversight of Robert Campbell, the Pelly Banks journals contain significantly fewer details than those that Campbell kept at Frances Lake Post. Despite the sparse content, the Pelly Banks journals contain similar insights into Indigenous activities in the region. However, the details of these activities are less extensive. For example, the journals discuss the arrivals and departures of Indigenous traders. However, in many cases Campbell did not acknowledge the specific Indigenous peoples he was trading with. Nor did he often discuss where they had come from and where they were departing to.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, there were certain instances where Campbell did provide more precise details. For example, on 13 December 1845, he mentioned the arrival of “the little Mountain Chief” with sixteen followers.⁸⁹ These arrivals were part of the ‘Mountain Indians’ who had traded at Frances Lake Post prior to the establishment of Pelly Banks. Campbell also periodically mentioned the names of individuals – such as “Le Grand Toton” who arrived at the post. Le Grand Toton had arrived at Pelly Banks along with three other Indigenous peoples on 7 January 1846. Similar to the situation at Fort Halkett and Frances Lake Post, individuals such as Le Grand Toton were likely considered to be ‘chiefs’ by the HBC.

Conclusion

As trading posts were established in the wake of exploration, more knowledge was produced about Indigenous peoples and their land use. Similar to how exploration shaped the type of knowledge the HBC acquired, the fixed location of trading posts also shaped knowledge production. In a sense, the information gathered at trading posts reflected a view from the post of the environment surrounding it. However, it would be too simplistic to suggest that the HBC

⁸⁸ See for example, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Robert Campbell fonds, MG 19, A 25, “Journal of Occurrences at Pelly Banks,” 1845-1847, 21 November 1845.

⁸⁹ LAC, Robert Campbell fonds, MG 19, A 25, “Journal of Occurrences at Pelly Banks,” 1845-1847, 13 December 1845.

traders' perspectives were limited to the trading posts. Provisioning activities in the region resulted in encounters between the post hunters and fishermen and Indigenous peoples. The hunters and fishermen, in turn, described these encounters to the chief traders at each of the respective posts. The chief traders then recorded the information in the post journals.

Knowledge produced at the trading posts was buttressed by what previous explorers had learned about Indigenous peoples. In fact, individuals such as John McLeod and Robert Campbell found themselves alternately undertaking exploratory journeys and overseeing the operations of a trading post. Nevertheless, the information gathered by HBC employees at trading posts was different. The fixed location of trading posts resulted in a more in-depth perspective of a specific region. However, the knowledge produced at the trading posts could also be spatially myopic. As HBC employees were generally centred around the trading posts, they were dependent on rumours reaching the post to get an understanding of what was happening around them. However, unlike exploration – which was generally limited to the summer months – trading posts were typically occupied on a year-round basis. This year-round occupation meant that the HBC recorded information about the activities of Indigenous peoples during each season of the year. Through the more-or-less continuous occupation of trading posts, knowledge created at trading posts overcame the temporal or seasonal myopia of the exploration narratives. Reports of Indigenous subsistence activities, middleman trade networks, warfare and other hostilities, starvation, and disease travelled from Indigenous encampments to trading posts. From these reports, the HBC employees were able to construct an imperfect understanding of the cultural, environmental, economic, and diplomatic relations in the Kaska territory. What the HBC learned about the Kaska was committed to the post journals at Fort Halkett, Frances Lake Post, and Pelly Banks Post, respectively. HBC understandings of Indigenous peoples' land use in the subarctic region of northwestern Canada

reflected the first European perception on this matter. The evidence produced by the fur traders – whether located at a trading post or undertaking an expedition – would later influence Kaska efforts to demonstrate their Aboriginal title.

CHAPTER THREE: “It was commencing to get wintery”: Ethnographic Fieldwork, Transportation, and Seasonality in the Yukon-BC Borderlands

Writing from Spences Bridge in southern British Columbia on 2 November 1912, James Teit told his employer and fellow anthropologist Edward Sapir that he had departed from the Cassiar region in the northern part of the province two weeks earlier: “It was commencing to get wintery at Telegraph Creek then, although the fall Throughout had been finer than usual. I came down the river with the last of the hunters.”¹ By participating in this exodus, Teit was taking part in a well-established rhythm of transportation in northwestern Canada. As winter began to set in and navigation on the northern rivers came to a close, miners, hunters, and other non-Indigenous peoples began evacuating the North in order to return to what they deemed a more hospitable climate. Those who waited too long to descend the Stikine River to the coast faced a much more arduous journey out. As Teit, who had previous experience in northern BC as a hunting guide, wrote: “In the latter part, and end of October ice usually starts running on the river, and you have to leave before the close of canoe navigation, otherwise you cannot get out until about Christmas by dog sleigh & snowshoes traveling a distance of possibly 250 miles.”² This seasonal rhythm of northern transportation limited Teit’s ethnographic fieldwork to the summertime. The short season for ethnographic fieldwork, in turn, limited the ethnographic knowledge produced by Teit. In the ensuing years, changes in transportation technology and transportation routes shaped the types of information that ethnographers were able to access in their fieldwork.

The transportation situation dramatically changed in 1942. In response to the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the American Army began constructing the Alaska

¹ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1911-1912), B635, f12, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 2 November 1912, Spences Bridge, BC.

² Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1911-1912), B635, f12, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 7 July 1912, Spences Bridge, BC.

Highway and Canol Pipeline (and, concomitant to the pipeline, the Canol Highway). These construction projects provided northern British Columbia and the Yukon with a transportation corridor to southern Canada and the United States that was less dependent on the seasons – although not completely immune to the inclement weather that was often brought on by the onset of winter. While ethnographic fieldwork was certainly not at the forefront of the highway planners’ thoughts and intentions when highway construction commenced, arriving remarkably close on the heels of soldiers and civilian construction workers were anthropologists and archaeologists, such as John Honigmann. The new highway provided anthropologists with easier access to Athapaskan groups and reduced their dependence on seasonal modes of travel. John Honigmann, for example, spent part of the winter of 1945 with the Kaska of Lower Post, a community immediately south of the BC-Yukon border.³

In the 2001 publication of *Northern Visions*, historians Ken Coates and William Morrison suggested that historians of northern Canada had ignored the effects of winter.⁴ Meanwhile, in the same volume, Bill Waiser called for greater consideration of the role that the tremendous distances between the North and the South, as well as the great distances between various places in the North, played in the region’s history.⁵ These are two aspects of northern Canadian history that have not been examined to any great extent. This chapter demonstrates not only how transportation and seasonality influenced life in the North, but how they influenced the knowledge produced about the North – specifically, the ethnographic knowledge coming out of the North. However, in this case, the influence of winter has been expanded to understand the influence of seasonality

³ John Joseph Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: An Ethnographic Reconstruction*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 5. Similarly, McClellan in *My Old People Say*, 9, notes that she spent the winter of 1950-1951 in the southern Yukon.

⁴ Ken S. Coates and William R. Morrison, “Winter and the Shaping of Northern History: Reflections of the Canadian North,” in *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History*, eds., Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates, (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), 23-35.

⁵ Bill Waiser, “A Very Long Journey: Distance and Northern History,” in *Northern Visions*, 37-44.

upon the production of ethnographic knowledge. Environmental historian Liza Piper has examined how individual researchers travelled to the Canadian North and how their modes of travel reflected their research interest. Specifically she discussed the travels of historians Harold Innis and Irene Biss (later Irene Spry).⁶ Piper suggested that in addition to reflecting their research interests, “these ways of moving through the North shaped their interpretations. This relationship between the field and the findings speaks to how field research generates insights that go beyond the data collected to the visceral experience of being in the field itself.”⁷ Similarly, those who travelled northward into the Liard and Pelly River watersheds and produced materials describing the culture and land use of the Kaska were influenced by their modes of transportation.

Teit was not the first person to experience the challenges of transportation routes and seasonality, and how they influenced the production of ethnographic knowledge. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, various southern Canadians and Americans developed an interest in the Canadian North for pursuits beyond the fur trade. For example, in 1887, as the Canadian government sought to ascertain the mineral resources of the Canadian North and assert sovereignty over the region, the Geological Survey of Canada dispatched a three-pronged expedition in an effort to ascertain the nature of the geology of what is now the Yukon Territory. Leading the expedition that travelled through much of the Kaska’s traditional territory was George Mercer Dawson. In addition to a growing interest in the mineral resources of the Canadian North, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw an emerging interest in northern wildlife. Big game hunters and conservationists ventured north on hunting expeditions. Upon their return home, they produced monographs, detailing their adventures for the consumption of the southern

⁶ Liza Piper, “Innis, Biss, and Industrial Circuitry in the Canadian North, 1921-1965,” in *Harold Innis and the North: Appraisals and Contestations*, ed. William J. Buxton, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013), 127-148.

⁷ Piper, “Industrial Circuitry in the Canadian North,” 129.

audience. Two such hunters who travelled into the Kaska traditional territories were Warburton Pike in 1892-1893 and Charles Sheldon in 1905. While professional ethnographers, such as Teit and Honigmann, focused primarily on Indigenous peoples, geologists and sport hunters described other aspects of the North, such as mineral resources and game populations. Nevertheless, these other concerns did not prevent these northern sojourners from participating in amateur anthropology. However, similar to Teit, the progress of these travellers – and consequently their perception of Indigenous land use – was circumscribed by the seasons.

The final ethnographic notes that reached public and academic audiences – whether it was through a geological report with ethnographic notes, a hunting narrative, or an actual ethnography – reflect Eurocentric renderings of Kaska culture and land use. However, these portrayals were also shaped by the Kaska individuals and other Indigenous individuals who participated in providing information to the northern sojourners. In her influential book *Imperial Eyes*, literary critic Mary Louise Pratt referred to this process as ‘autoethnography.’⁸ By considering not only the Eurocentric perspectives of those writing about the Kaska, but also examining the roles that the Kaska and neighbouring Athapaskan groups played in the production of ethnographic knowledge, this chapter goes beyond the texts of these final works. The chapter analyses the primary sources that were created in the production of these final monographs, such as field notes, journals, and correspondence. These documents provide important insights into the editorial process as often the more complicated ‘ground truth’ was distilled and sanitized into much more simple and concrete tribal associations and boundaries for traditional territories. Moreover, by tracking the process from field notes, journals, and correspondence to final ethnographic work, it is possible to more clearly elucidate the nature of the autoethnographic process. While the various

⁸ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd edition, (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 8-9.

documents produced during field work illuminate the role that Indigenous peoples, such as the Kaska played in shaping Euro-Canadian perceptions of their culture, the final monographs reflected the final decisions of the authors and the limitations to which Indigenous peoples were able to shape the views of those outside their culture.

By considering these supplementary sources to the final ethnographic works, one can also see cracks in the autoethnographic process. First, not every ethnographer – professional or otherwise – actually encountered every Indigenous groups that they wrote about in the Subarctic. The cause of these missed encounters was the seasonal nature of non-Indigenous peoples through the region. As travellers such as Dawson and Teit only ventured along the waterways in the summer, their fieldwork season was limited and the Indigenous groups they wished to encounter were not always present at the side of the river at the time of their passing. As a result, information about these groups was obtained by neighbouring Indigenous groups. In this respect, neighbouring Indigenous groups held a certain degree of power and ability to shape Euro-Canadian and Euro-American perceptions of Kaska land use and occupancy. While this aspect of representation might be seen as a weakness to the ethnographic production of knowledge, neighbouring groups to the Kaska may have been willing to communicate information to the ethnographers that the Kaska might not freely share.

Finally, in the ethnographic process, Pratt's 'autoethnographic expression' was also limited by the fact that those writing about the Kaska and other Athapaskan groups also gleaned information from non-Indigenous residents of the region. These non-Indigenous informants included miners, traders, and government officials. In this respect, while Indigenous peoples such as the Kaska exerted a certain degree of agency when it came to defining their cultural identities and associated land use and occupancy, they did so within a broader field of individuals, including

non-Indigenous residents who positioned themselves as ‘experts’ on the local cultures and neighbouring Indigenous groups – such as the Tahltan – who defined themselves in relation to their neighbours.

These travellers through the Kaska traditional territories rendered the information they gathered from their Indigenous and non-Indigenous informants into either ethnographies or travel narratives which were then circulated to a broader audience. As each ethnographer went North, they familiarized themselves with the knowledge created by those who had conducted fieldwork before them. Teit, for example, was familiar with what Dawson had written about the Tahltan and Kaska and, in turn, Honigmann was familiar with the previous writings of Teit and Dawson. Based on their readings of these historical documents, as well as their own personal fieldwork, each writer accepted, rejected, or tweaked what their predecessors had written. Each writer’s delineation of Kaska land use and occupancy was consequently premised on an assessment of historical ethnographic data as viewed from the contemporary experiences of ethnographic fieldwork, which was in turn shaped by transportation networks and seasonality.

George Mercer Dawson, the Geological Survey of Canada, and Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Canadian Northwest

Following the Hudson’s Bay Company’s (HBC) efforts to understand the cultural dynamics of the Liard, Stikine, and Pelly River watersheds to advance the fur trade, George Mercer Dawson travelled through the region on a geological survey. Dawson and his party – J. McEvoy, L. Lewis, and D. Johnson – travelled inland from Wrangell, Alaska via the Stikine River. They then portaged to Dease Lake and travelled down the Dease River to its confluence with the Liard River. From there, he travelled up the Liard and Frances Rivers to the headwaters of the latter before portaging to the Pelly River watershed. Dawson then travelled down the Pelly River to the

abandoned Hudson's Bay Company post of Fort Selkirk, at the confluence of the Pelly and Yukon Rivers (although, at the time, the part of the Yukon River upstream from its confluence with the Pelly River was known as the Lewes River). At Fort Selkirk, Dawson rendezvoused with fellow surveyor William Ogilvie, who was on his way down stream. Dawson then proceeded up the Yukon River to its headwaters and proceeded to cross the Chilkoot Pass to the coast. The party left Wrangell on 19 May 1887 and arrived at the head of the Lynn Canal on 20 September.⁹ Similar to the HBC's efforts to acquire knowledge to advance the interests of the fur trade, Dawson sought to acquire knowledge of the region to advance the interests of the fledgling Dominion of Canada.

Archaeologist N. Alexander Easton has identified two schools of thought concerning the motivations behind the GSC's Yukon Expedition. The proponents of one approach have suggested that there was a nationalistic motive behind the expedition. As the Yukon River watershed saw an increased number of American miners prospecting for gold, the Canadian government needed to make its presence known in the region in order to assert its claim to sovereignty over the Canadian northwest. The GSC expedition allowed the government to "determine the lay of the land" and establish sovereignty over the territory without conflict with the United States. Meanwhile, others scholars have argued that the expedition was undertaken for purely scientific regions.¹⁰ Easton has suggested that both perspectives are to a certain degree true, noting that "[t]he social and cultural contexts of scientific enquiry have a profound, though often subtle, effect on what, how, when and why any phenomenon is investigated."¹¹ As one of the motivations for exploration was the

⁹ N. Alexander Easton, "Introduction: The 1987 Centenary Edition," in George Mercer Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District, N.W.T. and Adjacent Northern Portion of British Columbia, 1887*, (Whitehorse, Yukon: Yukon Historical & Museums Association, 1987), xviii; McGill University Archives (MUA), George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 19 May 1887; George Mercer Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District, N.W.T. and Adjacent Northern Portion of British Columbia 1887*, (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1888), 10B.

¹⁰ Easton, "Introduction," xv.

¹¹ Easton, "Introduction," xvi.

expansion of the Canadian state, the surveyors sought to obtain knowledge of the region on behalf of the federal government. Consequently, surveyors such as Dawson sought diverse forms of knowledge, including information about the Indigenous population.

The region beyond Lower Post had been abandoned by the HBC in 1851. It remained abandoned during the intervening thirty-six years between the abandonment of Frances Lake Post and the GSC expedition.¹² However, the GSC built on the knowledge produced by the fur traders. George Dawson had departed for his expedition armed with information supplied by HBC fur trader and explorer Robert Campbell. Moreover, even though the primary focus of the GSC was to obtain geological knowledge, its activities extended into regions that had been poorly explored and mapped by Euro-Canadians. Its mandate consequently included surveying topographical features as well as gathering ethnographic information.¹³ As historian Morris Zaslow wrote in his history of the GSC: “A most important contribution of the survey during its long and honourable history, especially in the last half of the nineteenth century, was its part in rolling back the map of Canada.”¹⁴ The GSC expeditions in the Canadian North were an exercise in nation-building as expedition members sought to render these remote regions cognizable to southern audiences. As Zaslow has also demonstrated, the interests of these surveys also extended beyond geology and topography to also include the gathering of ethnological data.¹⁵ The appendix of Dawson’s final report consequently contained ethnographic notes about the various Indigenous groups occupying the territories his party passed through, providing the names of each group as well as the ranges of their traditional territories – as he understood it. However, Dawson was not accompanied by a

¹² R. Gotthardt, *Frances Lake: Traditional and Archaeological Sites*, (Watson Lake: Liard First Nation, 1993), 11.

¹³ Morris Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks: The Story of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1842-1972*, (Toronto/Ottawa: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited in association with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and Information Canada, 1975), 151-152.

¹⁴ Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks*, 151.

¹⁵ Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks*, 151-152.

professional anthropologist to carry out his work. Rather, he attempted to gather ethnographic data through his own inquiries with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals encountered during his travels, as well as through correspondence with Campbell.

In addition to the information obtained from Campbell, Dawson appears to have gained his first insights into band delineations and their interrelationships during his journey up the Stikine River. Dawson's journal is organized so that one page contains the daily entries, while the opposite page contains notes pertaining to the region's Indigenous peoples, mining activities, and river courses, among other topics. Early in the diary – likely written while he was travelling up the Stikine River – Dawson noted ethnographic details that he had been provided by George Cook and J.C. Callbreath, both residents of the Stikine region. These two men provided details on the hunting territories and the interrelationships between the various Indigenous groups in the area, most notably the Taku, Tahltan, and Kaska.¹⁶ Given that Dawson was travelling up the Stikine River in a region dominated by the Tahltan, the information he gathered was largely Tahltan-focused. Information about the relationships between the various Indigenous groups was primarily based on how other Indigenous groups related to the Tahltan. This information included insights into the overlapping territories used by the Tahltan and the coastal Tlingit along the Stikine River and past hostilities between the Tahltan and the Nass. While obtaining information about the Tahltan, Dawson also gleaned from white residents of the Stikine region some peripheral details about the Kaska (who, at this point, Dawson referred to as the “Cassears” or “Cassear Indians”), such as the meeting of the Tahltan and “Cassears” at the head of Dease Lake.¹⁷ Moreover, Dawson acquired

¹⁶ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887. No date is provided for this entry, however, it is apparent that this information was recorded during the second half of May 1887.

¹⁷ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887.

information from Callbreath that demonstrated a certain degree of control that the Kaska exercised over hunting and trapping in the Cassiar region:

Strictures of territorial claims evidenced by the fact that Nass Indians coming to Cassiar to work, if they kill beaver have right to meat, but must & do hand over skin to local Indians. Have no objection to Whites or Indians killing game in travelling, but strong objections to trapping. In 80 or 81 Whites went down Liard to trap, but were never [a]gain seen. Strong circumstantial evidence that they were murdered. {Cassear Indians.¹⁸

Dawson was consequently acquiring information on Kaska land use and land tenure prior to any contact he had with them.

The ethnographic information about the Tahltan, in turn, influenced the ways in which Dawson perceived their Kaska neighbours. For example, as evidenced in the published report of the expedition, Dawson appears to define the western limits of the Kaska's hunting territory in relation to the Tahltan. Discussing what he believed to be the eastern extent of Tahltan territory, the geologist stated: "Eastward it embraces Dease Lake, and goes as far down the Dease River as Eagle Creek, extending also to the west branch of the Black or Turnagain River. It includes also all the northern tributaries of the Stikine, and the Tahl-tan River to its source."¹⁹ Dawson described a relatively-well defined western boundary of Kaska hunting territory, while providing a vague delineation of the eastern extent of their hunting territories:

To the westward, the Kaska are bounded by the Tahl-tan. They hunt over the country which drains to the Dease east of McDame Creek; but north of the sources of streams reaching the Dease, they wander seldom, if at all, to the west of the Upper Liard. They also hunt over the basin of the Black and Turnagain River, southward, but not the head-waters of that stream, as the country there is claimed by the Al-ta'-tin ('Siccanie') of Bear Lake region, who have lately returned to it after having abandoned it for a number of years. Eastward they claim the country down the Liard to the site of Old Fort Halkett, and northward roam to the head of a long river (probably Smith River) which falls into the Liard near this place, also up

¹⁸ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887.

¹⁹ Dawson, *Report on an Exploration of the Yukon District*, 192B.

the Upper Liard as far as Frances Lake, though it would appear that not till recent years have they ventured so far in that direction.²⁰

What is particularly interesting about this statement about the extent of the Kaska hunting territory is the precise description of their western boundaries with the Tahltan in comparison to the vague description of eastern and northern boundaries of Kaska hunting territories. The information pertaining to the Kaska-Tahltan borderlands appears to have been a composite creation. Information was provided to Dawson by Calbreath, the few Kaska that Dawson met at Lower Post, and Mr. Egnell, the trader in charge at the post.²¹ Dawson also understood the site of the former HBC trading post Fort Halkett, located at the confluence of the Smith and Liard Rivers, to be the eastern boundary of the Kaska. Moreover, in discussing the Kaska's interrelationships with Athapaskan groups to the east, he stated that they were allied with those near Fort Liard (historically referred to as the Fort Liard Indians or Fort Liard Slave, now called the Acho Dene Koe).²² This statement obscures the much more complicated land use patterns and inter-band relationships that existed between Fort Halkett and Fort Liard.²³

As the transportation route up the Stikine River influenced Dawson's initial impressions of the territory he was entering, the season of his travels also played a role in shaping his perceptions. Similar to the explorations of HBC men, including John McLeod, Roderick McLeod, and

²⁰ Dawson, *Report on an Exploration of the Yukon District*, 200B.

²¹ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887. The information in the published report concerning the Tahltan corresponds with the undated information (but most likely acquired towards the end of May) attributed to J.C. Callbreath. Meanwhile, at Lower Post on 24 June 1887, Dawson write, "Pumping Indians for vocabulary & information about distribution of tribes. Rather difficult as they speak Chinook but poorly. Surrounded by a crowd of them [illegible] time in Egnell['s] home." While this entry does not indicate the extent to which Egnell participated in the process of producing ethnographic knowledge, the journal entry for the previous day (23 June 1887) mentions the trader informing Dawson about the remoteness of the Kaska's hunting territories from Lower Post.

²² MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, no date; Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District*, 199B.

²³ These relationships have been discussed by anthropologist John Honigmann following his fieldwork in the 1940s. Earlier fur trade records also revealed these complex relationships, which has been discussed by ethnohistorian J.C. Yerbury. John Joseph Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: An Ethnographic Reconstruction*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 20; J.C. Yerbury, "The Nahanny Indians and the Fur Trade: 1800-1840," *Musk Ox* 28 (1981): 43-57.

Dawson's correspondent Robert Campbell, the GSC undertook its travels during the summer months. The seasonal nature of travel determined the types of Indigenous seasonal activities that they would observe as well as who they would meet – depending on the seasonal rounds of the Athapaskan who lived along the expedition party's route. The progress of Dawson's expedition was also hampered by the abnormally cold spring. As his party travelled from Telegraph Creek to Dease Lake by mule and oxen train, Dawson commented on the lateness of the season as compared to his travels along the Stikine River. For example, writing from his camp at the Tanzilla River on 2 June 1887, Dawson noted, "Season evidently later as we get up & East, & feed [for mules] here pretty poor as yet, aspens, however, all green with young leaves."²⁴ Finally, on Dawson's arrival at Dease Lake he found that the lake still had ice cover:

Ice still in lake, broken up & some open water at this end where shallow, but farther down Reid three days ago travelled considerable distance with a small boat on a sled, over the ice itself. He is doubtful whether can get back to Laketon, but started out shortly after our arrival in small boat with intention of Caching boat & stuff on bank of lake if he cannot get through.²⁵

On 17 June, Dawson noted that it was the "[l]atest opening of lake known."²⁶ This delay in departing from Dease Lake affected the amount of time that Dawson's party was able to spend on the Liard and Yukon River watersheds as well as their chances of encountering Indigenous peoples as they travelled. The seasonal nature of Athapaskan travel reduced the possibilities of encounters with Dawson's party. By the time Dawson reached the Lower Post, the trading post at the confluence of the Dease and Liard Rivers, he met the last families of Kaska that remained at the post. The majority of Kaska families had already departed from the post.²⁷ Moreover, in the intervening time between leaving Lower Post and reaching the confluence of the Pelly and Yukon

²⁴ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 2 June 1887.

²⁵ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 3 June 1887.

²⁶ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 17 June 1887.

²⁷ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 23 June 1887.

Rivers, Dawson's party did not encounter any Athapaskans, in spite of finding numerous signs of their presence.²⁸ During his extended stay on the shores of Dease Lake, Dawson also obtained a small amount of ethnographic information about the Sekanie and Dakelh (then referred to as Carrier) from the manager of the HBC post. These were two Athapaskan groups whose traditional territories were not on the GSC's travel route.²⁹ The slow onset of summer also indicated the type of ethnographic information that Dawson gathered.

While much of Dawson's perception of Kaska and other Athapaskans' culture and land use patterns – particularly those living along the Stikine, Dease, and Liard Rivers – was obtained from non-Indigenous northerners, he also gleaned information from Indigenous peoples themselves. This knowledge was obtained through observing the Indigenous peoples he met, inquiries of the Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous peoples' creation of sketch maps. In this respect, they influenced a certain degree of agency in the ethnographic process. Dawson obtained some information on the Kaska from the few remaining traders at Lower Post on 24 June. Based on notes on the opposite page from the journal entry, Dawson learned the Kaska names for Dease and Frances Rivers (both being Too-tsho-tooa', meaning river from big lake). However, while the Kaska at Lower Post were supplying Dawson with ethnographic information, there is also a possibility that some information was lost in translation. As the geologist commented in his diary: "Rather difficult as they speak Chinook but poorly."³⁰

Dawson hired some of the Kaska he met at Lower Post to assist his travels to Frances Lake, enabling him to obtain additional ethnographic materials. While travelling up river, the GSC party

²⁸ Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District*, 8B.

²⁹ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 17 June 1887.

³⁰ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 24 June 1887 and undated notes on opposite page.

relied on Indigenous geographical knowledge to ascertain the obstacles that lay ahead.³¹ Additionally, while travelling up the Frances River, Dawson's Kaska guides drew a map of the region and its rivers and lakes, providing Kaska names for these features.³² Likely as a result of this map and other information provided by the Kaska (the map appears to have disappeared), Dawson was able to record numerous Indigenous names for rivers flowing into Frances Lake, which were included in his report.³³ In this respect, the Kaska from the Dease and Liard River region were able to display a certain degree of agency with respect to their representation in the ethnographic literature.

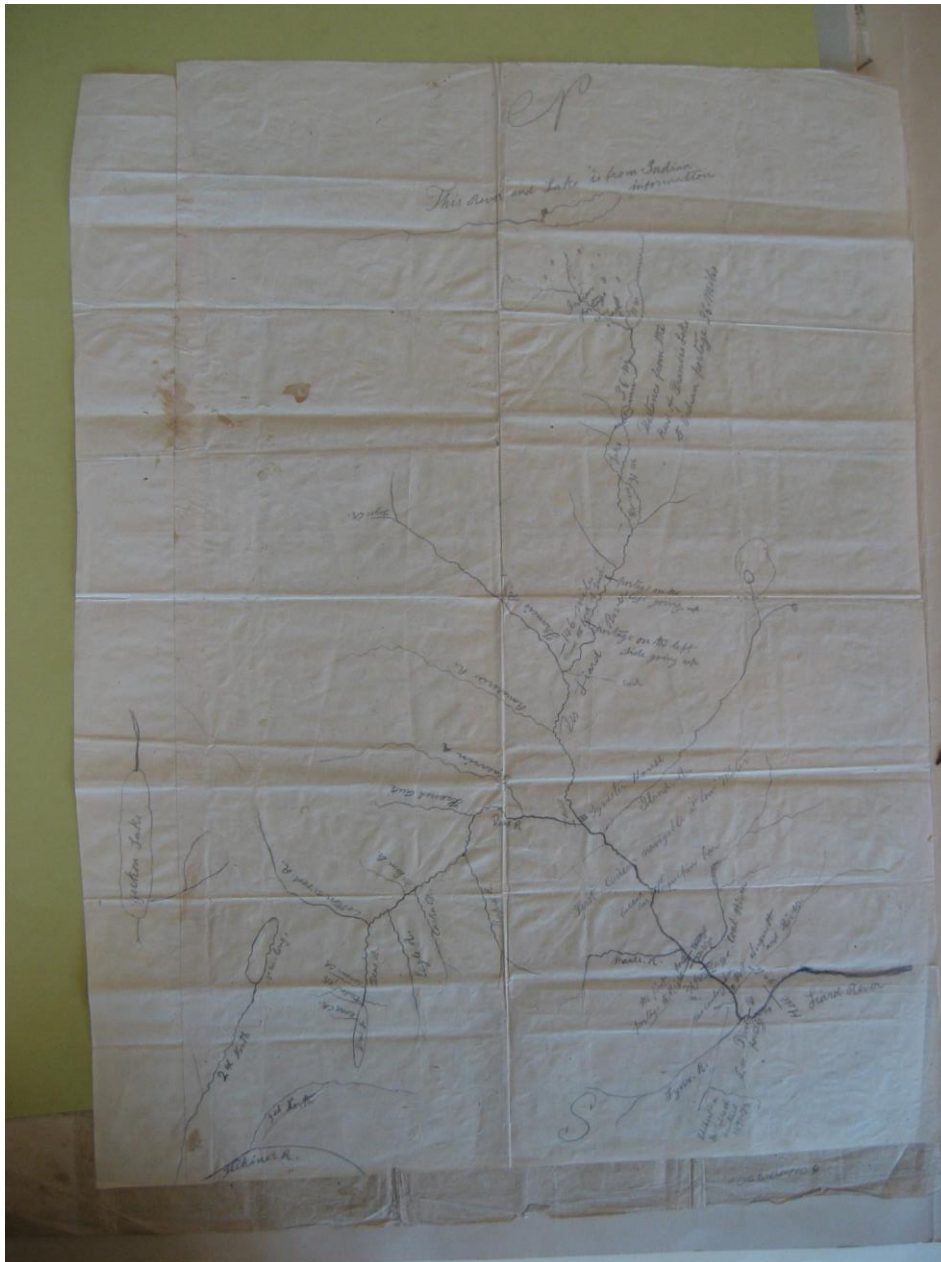
³¹ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 30 June 1887 and 1 July 1887.

³² MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 1 July 1887.

³³ Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District*, 109B-111B.

Figure 3-1: George Dawson Map of Upper Liard Watershed³⁴

While this map was not the one created by Dawson's Kaska guides (described above), it nevertheless contains information provided by his guides. For example, it is annotated with a note by a lake and stream specifying: "This river and lake is from Indian information."



³⁴ LAC, RG45, Geological Survey of Canada, Accession 912020, Box 2000169455, Item 13, NMC 17378.

Figure 3-2: George Dawson Map of Upper Liard Watershed (closeup view)³⁵



While Dawson was able to obtain information from the Kaska he encountered at Lower Post, he did not encounter any other Indigenous peoples between Lower Post and a location near the confluence of the Pelly and Yukon Rivers. As a result, he was forced to make inferences into Athapaskan land use and occupancy. Dawson's understanding of Indigenous land use in the region between Lower Post and the confluence of the Pelly and Yukon Rivers consisted of a combination of information gathered by neighbouring Indigenous groups, as well as non-Indigenous residents of adjacent regions. The geologist also made inferences into signs (or in some cases, the absence

³⁵ LAC, RG45, Accession 912020, Box 2000169455, Item 13, NMC 17378.

of signs) of Indigenous presence, such as unoccupied camps. As the Dawson party arrived at Frances Lake on 8 July 1887, it was disappointed not to encounter anyone: “See no trace of Indians having been lately on the lake, which disappointing, as had counted on getting some help from local Indians on the portage work. May even be at a loss to find proper place as the maps prove very untrustworthy in detail.”³⁶ This statement implicitly demonstrates the challenges that Dawson faced in meeting the Frances Lake Kaska to obtain ethnographic details. The geologist also drew attention to the reliance of the exploration party on Indigenous geographical knowledge to make steady progress towards the Pelly River watershed. During their time at Frances Lake, Dawson’s guides set fires in the hopes that the smoke would attract any Frances Lake Kaska to them.³⁷ Attempts were also made to find trails used by the Athapaskans to cross from the Frances River watershed into the Pelly River watershed. For example, on 10 July 1887, Dawson recorded in his journal, “Climbed hill & reconnoitered on both sides to see any Indian trail.”³⁸ Later in the same diary entry he commented: “Have a lingering hope that some local Indians may yet turn up to assist us over the portage, which would be a great thing. Not only help us in packing, but assurance that we are going by the right road & the best one. Would also encourage our Coast Indians who are beginning to look very gloomy over the prospect of packing into the unknown interior away from water communications.”³⁹ While at Frances Lake, the GSC party saw smoke, interpreting it as a sign of the presence of Indigenous peoples. Writing on 20 August 1887 en route to Finalyson Lake, Dawson noted the presence of smoke: “See smoke ahead today, a good many miles off, possibly where the lake is. This is the first sign of Indians we have seen wandering about on separate racks

³⁶ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 8 July 1887.

³⁷ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 9 July 1887, 12 July 1887, and 13 July 1887.

³⁸ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 10 July 1887.

³⁹ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 10 July 1887.

through the woods.”⁴⁰ However, on the following day when the party reached the point where the smoke had been spotted, Dawson commented, “See nothing of Indians, & no fresh traces along river.”⁴¹ As Dawson neared Finlayson Lake, he commented further on the presence of smoke: “Columns of smoke here & there some I fear from fires of our own setting. See also some fires ahead evidencing presence of Indians. Camp in burnt woods all well tired out.”⁴²

In addition to not encountering any Indigenous peoples around Frances Lake, the GSC party also did not see anyone for the majority of its journey down the Pelly River. Not encountering anyone on the upper Pelly River was a bittersweet result for the expedition members who had been hearing rumours of hostilities between Indigenous peoples and Euro-Americans since camping on the shores of Dease Lake.⁴³ During the expedition’s descent of the Pelly River, Dawson commented, “In view of possible hostility of the Indians do not wish to remain longer than necessary in Camp here.”⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Dawson speculated that his party might encounter groups of Indigenous peoples at Hoole Canyon and noted various signs of their recent presence, such as camping sites and moccasin tracks. Dawson had learned that Indigenous peoples on the Pelly River might be fishing at the canyon from the Kaska he had met on the Liard River. However, the party did not encounter anyone at Hoole Canyon.⁴⁵ As the party proceeded downriver, they saw more signs indicating the former occupation of certain sites by Indigenous peoples, such as camps, moccasin tracks, and rafts used for crossing the river.⁴⁶ Finally, on 8 August 1887, Dawson’s party met the first people that they had seen since leaving Lower Post:

⁴⁰ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 20 July 1887.

⁴¹ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 21 July 1887.

⁴² MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 23 July 1887.

⁴³ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 6 June 1887; Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District*, 10B.

⁴⁴ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 29 July 1887.

⁴⁵ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 29 July and 1-3 August 1887.

⁴⁶ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 4-7 August 1887.

About 4 m. before camp meet an Indian & his little son with cottonwood canoe working up stream. When first seen the man crouching on a bar, was mistaken for a bear. These the first human beings besides our own party seen since leaving Sylvester's lower post, & they appeared more surprised than we, though not alarmed. Gave the man some tobacco matches, & tried to extract some information from him, but as he could scarcely speak a word of Chinook, conversation somewhat unsatisfactory. Understand that we are now near the forks of a river, which I suppose may be the Macmillan. Also that all the Indians now on head waters of rivers. Could only tell him in response to his enquiry as to this that we had seen none of them. Both father & son had neat silver rings in septum of nose, & not badly dressed, with cloth shirts ornaments with bead-work. Mild mannered looking people enough so far as appearances go.⁴⁷

This encounter sheds light on the effects of seasonality and Dawson's efforts to acquire ethnographic information. According to the man encountered by the party, most of the Indigenous peoples in the area were located at the headwaters of the rivers, thus limiting the chances of any encounters as Dawson descended the river.

Dawson's anxiety about hostilities between Indigenous peoples proved unfounded. As they descended the Pelly River, the expedition members encountered a group of miners who discussed the rumours: "Miners tell us that no trouble whatever between Whites & Indians, that story spread by men who had been run out of the country for misconduct."⁴⁸

Despite not meeting any of the Athapaskans of the upper Pelly River, Dawson nevertheless attempted to determine the territory they occupied. In his diary under the heading "Indians," Dawson provided names and rough approximations of the traditional territories of the various Athapaskan groups in the Yukon River watershed. This information appears to have been provided by William Ogilvie after their rendezvous at the abandoned Fort Selkirk. Within these notes, Dawson wrote of the Athapaskans on the upper Pelly River: "Na-ai' on head waters of Pelly & toward Frances Lake. Trade at Sylvester's lower post at times. This year have all gone over to

⁴⁷ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 8 August 1887.

⁴⁸ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, 10 August 1887.

Stewart R hunting, consider hunting ground there better.”⁴⁹ In his published report Dawson acknowledged that he had acquired few details about the ‘Na-ai’, “a circumstance due to the fact that we scarcely met any of these Indians, nor did we proceed far enough down the main river to meet the traders, from whom something might doubtless have been obtained.”⁵⁰ Nevertheless, evidently having done extra reading on the matter, Dawson provided a description of what he saw to be their territory:

The name of the Indian tribe inhabiting the Upper Pelly valley was given by the Indians at the mouth of the Dease as ta-koos-oo-ti-na, by Indians met by us near the site of Fort Selkirk as Na-ai’. The territory of this tribe includes also the basin of the Macmillan and that of the Stewart as far down as the mouth of the Beaver, or “First North Fork,” a very extensive region. I believe, however, that the names above noted either refer to local sub-divisions of the tribe, or are terms applied to them by neighbouring tribes and not recognized by themselves. [William Healy] Dall in his article ... (following Ross) gives Abbāto-tenā’ as the name of a tribe inhabiting the Upper Pelly and Macmillan, while [Emile] Petitot places the name Esbā-ta-otinnè in the same region. [Robert] Campbell again states that the Indians met by him on the Pelly were “Knife Indians,” and I think there can be very little doubt that the true name of this tribe is Es-pā-to-ti-na, formed by the combination of the word Es-pā-zah (meaning knife in the neighbouring Kaska language) and ti-na. This is again evidently the same with the name rendered to me as Spo-to-ti-na by a trader in Cassiar and said by him, to be a Kaska name for the tribe to the north of their country.⁵¹

While today the Indigenous peoples of the upper Pelly River, the Ross River Dena Council, identify with the larger Kaska Nation, Dawson’s ambiguity with respect to their relationship with the Kaska further south had implications for subsequent ethnographic work.⁵²

Sport Hunters and the Kaska Dena

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sport hunters also traversed the Liard and Pelly River watersheds. Following their travels, sport hunters, such as Warburton Pike

⁴⁹ MUA, George Mercer Dawson fond, MG 1022 C82 item 59 Diary 1887, no date.

⁵⁰ Dawson, *Report on an Exploration of the Yukon District*, 201B.

⁵¹ Dawson, *Report on an Exploration of the Yukon District*, 201B-2-202B.

⁵² Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 22-23 also separates the Athapaskans of the upper Pelly River from the remainder of the Kaska, although Dawson is not directly cited.

and Charles Sheldon, produced travel narratives describing their travels through the subarctic. Following his 1892-93 travels through the Cassiar and Pelly regions and down the Yukon River, Pike wrote *Through the Subarctic Forest*. Similarly, Sheldon wrote *The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon* after his various sheep hunting expeditions undertaken during 1904 and 1905. While primarily focused on pursuit of big game – such as moose and sheep – these narratives also described Indigenous peoples. Pike and Sheldon did not arrive in the subarctic without preconceptions of its environment and inhabitants. Both hunters had read Dawson's report.⁵³ As they travelled through the region, the hunters were influenced by the transmission of knowledge from fur trader Robert Campbell to George Dawson.

Similar to the members of the GSC expedition, Pike and Sheldon relied on river travel. Consequently, most of their travels occurred during the summer. However, Pike, having arrived in the interior shortly before freeze-up, spent the winter in the Liard region of northern British Columbia. During the winter, he gained various insights into Indigenous hunting and trapping practices in the region, as well as a more intimate view of the region's ecology. For example, over the winter while undertaking a moose hunt, Pike learned about Indigenous peoples' hunting preferences in the region:

Besides rabbits, and the attendant lynx, there were a good many porcupines, fat and easily killed by following a fresh track. These were objects of greater interest to our Indians than the moose, which are by no means a certainty, and often lead to much hard walking without any result. The porcupines really are most excellent eating at this time of year; but in the spring and summer, when they have lost their fat, their flesh is only tolerable under the pressure of necessity.⁵⁴

⁵³ Warburton Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest: A Record of a Canoe Journey from Fort Wrangel to the Pelly Lakes and Down the Yukon River to the Behring Sea*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1896), vii-viii; Charles Sheldon, *The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon: A Hunter's Explorations for Wild Sheep in Sub-Arctic Mountains*, (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1911), 184-186. Sheldon also noted a familiarity with Pike's prior travel narrative.

⁵⁴ Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, 88.

Pike observed elements of Indigenous wildlife harvesting practices that were seasonal in nature. While not specifically mentioning snow, it is implicitly acknowledged that various species could be more easily tracked during the winter. Additionally, Pike noted that porcupines' wintertime fat made its meat more palatable to Indigenous peoples. Finally, Indigenous peoples' preferences to eat smaller game as opposed to moose indicates different Indigenous values with respect to hunting in contrast to that of sport hunters who sought trophies.⁵⁵

During the winter of 1892-93, Pike also learned about the dynamic nature of the region's ecology and the concomitant adaptability of Kaska hunting practices:

Twenty-five years ago there were very few moose along the Liard, and the animal was unknown to the Indians hunting to the westward of Dease Lake. Then there began to be frequent rumours of a big track seen in the snow, and momentary glimpses of a beast whose size varied according to the fancy of the startled hunter. Then a young brave stood face to face with a moose, and slew it; and the Cascas discovered that a new animal—larger and better than anything they knew before—had invaded their country. To-day, the little-known region drained by the Dease, the Upper Liard, the Frances, and the Pelly, is probably the best moose country on the continent of North America.⁵⁶

This ecological transition was similarly described by the trader, trapper, and prospector Poole Field in the Ross River and Pelly River region. In 1913, Field wrote, "As the moose increased the caribou decreased until up to a few years ago, when they seem to be increasing again. But I believe up to date there is now decrease in the moose."⁵⁷

To facilitate his travel through the region, Pike depended on geographical information from his guides. This information provided insights into Kaska land use. However, Pike had an ambivalent view on Indigenous geographical knowledge. In the preface to *Through the Subarctic Forest*, Pike maligned Indigenous knowledge while praising the cartographic efforts of the GSC,

⁵⁵ Tina Loo, "Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in British Columbia, 1880-1939," *Western Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 296-319.

⁵⁶ Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, 89-90.

⁵⁷ Poole Field as quoted in J.H. MacNeish, ed., "The Poole Field Letters (1913)," *Anthropologica* 4 (1957): 53.

which freed travellers from “the vague information afforded by Indians, who take little account of time or distance.”⁵⁸ In spite of his antipathy towards Indigenous geographical knowledge, Pike acknowledged his dependence on Indigenous knowledge when it came to locating game. While noting that a “stranger” to the country who lacked local knowledge faced great uncertainty during the hunt, Pike stated that “an Indian, familiar with the country from childhood, will make a straight line for the well-known haunts of the game he wishes to hunt.”⁵⁹

As Pike undertook his travels in earnest during the spring and summer of 1893, he employed Indigenous guides. As he travelled with his guides, he gained insights into the extent of his guides’ territorial familiarity. For example, when preparing to transition from the Frances River watershed into the Pelly River watershed, Pike stated: “Our first guide, who had joined us at the mouth of the Frances, continued with us, as, although he admitted frankly that he knew nothing of the country, he was useful for hauling a hand-sleigh, and would be a companion for Secatz in his journey back to the Liard Post.”⁶⁰

While lack of geographical knowledge was provided as a reason for the guide’s return to Liard Post (or Lower Post) after assisting with hauling the sleigh, Pike had also learned of antipathy between the Indigenous peoples of the Frances and Liard River basin and that of the Pelly River region. While ascending the Frances River, Pike was informed about hunting conflicts between the Liard Kaska and those of the Pelly River watershed:

One of these hills, known to the natives as “Chesi,” was once a sure find for big-horn [sheep], but a few years ago, during a season of deep snow, they were nearly all killed by a band of Pelly River Indians, who made themselves very unpopular with the Liard tribes in consequence of this breach of the hunting laws, which require each hunter to keep within his own territory. Any sheep that survived the

⁵⁸ Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, viii.

⁵⁹ Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, 80.

⁶⁰ Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, 141.

raid have since avoided Chesi and sought security in the higher ranges to the north.⁶¹

Not only did Pike hear about hunting disputes in the region, but also gained insights into customary hunting rights. Providing additional insights into the current state of affairs between the Indigenous peoples of the Liard and Pelly Rivers, the Liard Chief cautioned the hunter against traveling to the upper Pelly River. The chief suggested that the Indigenous peoples at the headwaters of the Pelly River would lead to his “untimely death.”⁶² Pike was dismissive of this suggestion, stating, “Such is the Indian’s nature; anything he does not know and has not seen is bad.”⁶³

Similar to fur traders, Pike also watched for signs indicating the presence of Indigenous peoples. In 1892, prior to the onset of winter, the sport hunter undertook an excursion up the Hyland River (known to HBC fur traders as the McPherson River). Pike wrote that the Indigenous peoples of the Liard region generally avoided the region. In recounting a story explaining the Upper Liard Kaska’s avoidance of the river, he described an evil presence that capsized hunting boats.⁶⁴ It would appear, however, that the Kaska avoided river travel in the area. Pike later noted that he observed numerous spruce bark canoes onshore. Elaborating on Indigenous travel through the region, Pike write: “The Cascas and Liard Indians are poor boatmen, and do not make much use of the waterways, preferring to pack heavy loads through the woods to working a canoe up stream; while, if they wish to run down a river, they can make a bark or skin canoe in a few hours, and lose nothing by throwing it away at the end of the run.”⁶⁵ Later on the upper reaches of the Pelly River, Pike noted the presence Indigenous fishing camps, including stages for drying

⁶¹ Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, 120.

⁶² Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, 127.

⁶³ Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, 127.

⁶⁴ Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, 77-78.

⁶⁵ Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, 81.

salmon.⁶⁶ After witnessing these encampments, Pike inferred, “Every year, no doubt, the Pelly Indians camp here to gather their harvest, which needs no sowing, but comes of its own accord from the distant waters of the Behring Sea.”⁶⁷

In the summer of 1905, sport hunter Charles Sheldon undertook a sheep hunting trip on the upper Pelly River. Sheldon was a wealthy sport hunter from New York. Around the turn of the century, Sheldon had acquired a share in a mine in Mexico, which made him wealthy. During his time in Mexico, he developed an interest in hunting sheep and grizzly bears. This interest would eventually bring him to the Yukon and Alaska.⁶⁸ The famous American sportsman ascended the river to the community of Ross River aboard the Royal North-West Mounted Police steamer *Vidette*, having secured passage through his friendship with Major Zachary Taylor Wood.⁶⁹ Sheldon arrived on the upper Pelly River, carrying the knowledge he had obtained from reading Dawson’s report. Describing the details of the geologist’s report and its veracity, Sheldon wrote: “Not only are the topography, geology, climatic conditions and natural history, treated as fully as the limited time on such a long journey would permit, but space is also given to the history of the region and a discussion of the Indian tribes inhabiting it. The accompanying maps are complete and accurate.”⁷⁰ Sheldon had also read Pike’s *Through the Subarctic Forest*, which he suggested “will forever remain one of the classics of north-western travel.”⁷¹ Thus, as Sheldon travelled through the upper Pelly River region, his knowledge of its Indigenous population was shaped by the previous works of Dawson and Sheldon. To this end, when Sheldon arrived in Ross River on

⁶⁶ Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, 178-179.

⁶⁷ Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest*, 179.

⁶⁸ Theodore Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos, and National Parks in Alaska*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 94; Ken Ross, *Pioneering Conservation in Alaska*, (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2006), 131.

⁶⁹ Sheldon, *The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon*, 177.

⁷⁰ Sheldon, *The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon*, 185.

⁷¹ Sheldon, *The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon*, 186.

21 July, he met with a large contingent of Indigenous peoples who are awaiting the arrival of the local trader. Basing his analysis on Dawson's previous work, Sheldon theorized on the Indigenous peoples' "exact ethnological status," writing:

The tribe of Pelly Indians, including all its members, comprised eighty-nine Indians. There is some doubt that it should be included in the group of tribes referred to by the Hudson[s] Bay Company as Nahanni. It is also closely allied to that branch of the Nahanni group designated as Kaska, which includes two cognate tribes occupying the territory tributary to Dease River east of McDames Creek, and to the upper Liard River. The tribe is called by different names by the adjacent tribes, and Dr. Dawson proposes the name *Es-pat-o-ti-na*. By comparing numerous words of the Pelly Indians with those in the vocabularies appended to Dr. Dawson's report, I found them to correspond very closely, if not exactly (most of them are the same) with those of the *Ti-tsho-ti-na* tribe—the western branch of the Kaska.⁷²

As Sheldon tried to delineate ethnographic affiliations as an ancillary activity to his sport hunting, he built on previous representations of the Kaska.

Similar to other northern travellers, the seasonal nature of Sheldon's travels affected his contact with Indigenous peoples and the types of activities he witnessed. For example, his ascent of the Pelly River in mid-to-late July coincided with the salmon runs. Consequently, on 20 July 1905, as the *Vidette* approached Ross River, Sheldon witnessed Indigenous peoples fishing salmon. Commenting on the individuals he met at the fish camp, Sheldon wrote: "[W]e came to their camp, where four families were occupying tents. They were catching salmon, and numerous fish were hung to dry on poles. They had an abundant supply of moose meat, and never have I seen Indians in the north of such healthy and vigorous appearance."⁷³ Elaborating on the seasonal movements of Indigenous peoples, Sheldon wrote: "Their country has been partitioned, and sections are allotted to different members of the tribe, who spend the fall, winter, and spring hunting and trapping until the salmon arrive, when they catch and dry enough to last them for a

⁷² Sheldon, *The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon*, 190-191.

⁷³ Sheldon, *The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon*, 188.

short time, until they again begin to hunt.”⁷⁴ Sheldon’s coincidental ascent of the Pelly River at the time of the salmon run – as well as the aforementioned gathering at the trading post in Ross River – demonstrates how the seasonal mobility patterns of Indigenous peoples and the transportation preferences of Euro-Americans influenced encounters between the two.

Similar to Pike, Sheldon depended on Indigenous knowledge for the success of his hunting excursion. As he wrote about the acquisition of local knowledge to facilitate access to sheep hunting grounds, the sport hunter tried to do so in a way that did not diminish his own expertise as an explorer. For example, when relating his efforts to “penetrate the Pelly Mountains,” Sheldon wrote:

In these ranges Indians had their hunting grounds, principally for moose, since they only kill sheep on the outer range. Except for an occasional prospector who wandered near the outer range, no white man had hunted in their depths, and practically nothing was known about them. For the purpose of penetrating them I had brought *Danger* [a pack horse], but the question of a feasible route, and the habitat of the sheep, remained to be solved. I hoped to get from the Indians sufficient information to enable us to reach the outer range, from which it would be necessary to find a way into the interior ranges beyond.⁷⁵

As Sheldon described his plans to hunt for sheep in the Pelly Mountains, he portrayed a landscape that had not been witnessed by white men and raised questions about Indigenous activities in the region. Although ethnography was not the primary motivation of sport hunters – such as Pike and Shelton – their representations of Indigenous land use factored into subsequent ethnographies.⁷⁶

Kaska Encounters with Twentieth Century Ethnography: James Alexander Teit and John Joseph Honigmann

Following his previous experiences in northern BC as a hunting guide, James Alexander Teit travelled to the region twice in order to undertake ethnographic fieldwork: in 1912 and again

⁷⁴ Sheldon, *The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon*, 192.

⁷⁵ Sheldon, *The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon*, 188-189.

⁷⁶ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, contains various references to the works of Pike and Sheldon.

in 1915. Teit's travels to the Stikine and Cassiar regions were undertaken in order to carry out an ethnographic survey for the Ethnology Division of the federal government. During each of these journeys, the anthropologist was limited to travelling north during the summer. This travel pattern was centred around the opening and closing of navigation along the Stikine River. The challenges of travelling North were compounded by the fact that Teit lived at Spence's Bridge in southern BC – a long distance from the Kaska and Tahltan. On top of these transportation challenges, as anthropologist Robert G. Adlam has noted, Teit's work to secure a fair land settlement, or treaty, for BC's Indigenous peoples also diverted him away from his anthropological work.⁷⁷ Writing to Edward Sapir, the head ethnographer for the GSC, Ethnology Division, Teit suggested that in the summer of 1912 he intended to travel to the region in mid-August while the steamer was still running. He proposed this timeframe for his northern travels in order to avoid having to take a launch or canoe up river.⁷⁸ Teit expected to remain in the Cassiar-Stikine region until 20 October. He suggested that this date was "the latest one can stay with any safety on account of ice in the river. The last hunters and miners will be going out about that time and I will go with them."⁷⁹

These challenges centring around river navigation were reiterated as Teit prepared for his 1915 trip north. This journey was to be a far more ambitious undertaking. Writing of his travel plans in October 1913 – which were required to be postponed due to a confluence of factors including poor health – he wrote:

I will go to the head of the Liard to try and meet the bunch of Indians when they rendezvous there so as to get an idea of the dialects spoken in the country up & down the Liard and North into Yukon for considerable distance. I expect also on another trip to get in touch with some Sekanais bands in the South and SE. I will

⁷⁷ Robert G. Adlam, "The Northern Athabaskan Survey of Edward Sapir and James A. Teit," *Anthropological Linguistics* 49, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 109.

⁷⁸ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1911-1912), B635, f12, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 5 April 1912, Spences Bridge, BC.

⁷⁹ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1911-1912), B635, f12, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 6 September 1912, Telegraph Creek, BC.

also be able to do the Kaska of Dease River &c and hope to make a third trip the same season to investigate the Salmon River, Telsin & Atlin.⁸⁰

In planning for this ambitious journey, Teit relied on local knowledge of transportation routes. He wrote to Sapir: “There is a man coming out of the Cassiar in a few weeks over the river ice before it breaks up, and I think he will be able to tell me about the dates of trips with canoes to the Liard, and know something of the movements of the Indians there during the summer.”⁸¹ When Teit finally undertook the scaled-down version of his northern travels, he obtained first-hand experience of the perils of exiting the North too late in the fall. Writing while safe at his home in Spences Bridge, Teit told Sapir that gas-powered boats had been unable to ascend the Stikine River to Telegraph Creek due to low water in the fall. The seventeen people who had been awaiting transportation to the coast were forced to construct their own boats and descend the Stikine. According to Teit, “It took us four days to reach Wrangel [sic] two days & nights of which it snowed continually.”⁸²

While the freeze-up of northern rivers and the concomitant ability – or inability – to travel through the North influenced the timing of Teit’s fieldwork, an additional, and equally important, element which determined when the anthropologist travelled through the region was the seasonal movements of the Athapaskan population. Teit learned from various non-Indigenous northerners, such as George Adsit, who also assisted Honigmann three decades later, about the seasonal movements of Indigenous peoples.⁸³ Moreover, Teit also received information on Athapaskan

⁸⁰ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1913-1914), B635, f13, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 16 October 1913, Spences Bridge, BC.

⁸¹ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1913-1914), B635, f13, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 11 March 1913, Spences Bridge, BC.

⁸² Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1915), B635, f14, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 13 November 1915, Spences Bridge, BC.

⁸³ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1911-1912), B635, f12, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 29 December 1912, Spences Bridge, BC; Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 14.

seasonal movements from the individual who had provided information on canoe routes.⁸⁴ Ultimately, Teit was interested in rendezvousing with the Tahltan and Kaska during the summer while they were congregated in larger groups. Writing to Sapir in preparation for his 1912 journey north, Teit wrote: “There is not much to stay for after October as practically the whole tribe breaks up, and scatters out for trapping generally in groups of two or three families, many of them going long distances and not returning until spring. The season to catch the northern people at home is in the summer time (or any times between May and end of Oct.).”⁸⁵

Although Teit had clearly thought out how he could balance the seasonal nature of northern transportation with the seasonal mobility of the Tahltan, Kaska, and other Athapaskan groups, winter freeze-up nevertheless imposed restrictions on his ability to carry out field work. For example, the short amount of time spent in the North in 1912 hampered his linguistic work.⁸⁶ Moreover, Teit struggled to coordinate his timing for travelling further into BC’s interior (beyond the Tahltan) in order to rendezvous with other Athapaskan groups. Teit wrote from Telegraph Creek on 19 July 1915: “I am leaving here in two or three days for the Kaskas. From what I hear lately I may have difficulty meeting some of the Indians further east who may not be in their usual haunts.”⁸⁷ While he successfully carried out fieldwork with the band that has been designated by anthropologists as the ‘Kaska proper,’⁸⁸ he failed to connect with Kaska of the Liard River. Teit

⁸⁴ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1913-1914), B635, f13, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 11 March 1913, Spences Bridge, BC.

⁸⁵ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1911-1912), B635, f12, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 7 July 1912, Spences Bridge, BC.

⁸⁶ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1911-1912), B635, f12, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 2 November 1912, Spences Bridge, BC.

⁸⁷ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1915), B635, f14, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 19 July 1915, Telegraph Creek, BC.

⁸⁸ Teit refers to the Kaska along the Dease River as the “Kaska proper” in Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1911-1912), B635, f12, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 7 September 1915, Telegraph Creek, BC. This designation is reiterated by John Joseph Honigmann in *The Kaska Indians*, 19.

had learned from the occupants of boats returning from the Liard that “all the Indians had already scattered and left so there was no use to go beyond the Kaska proper.”⁸⁹ During the same year, the McKenna-McBride Reserve Commission was attempting to gather information regarding the land use of BC’s northern indigenous peoples with the intention of establishing reserves. Similar to Teit, they also struggled to make contact with various, more ‘remote’ groups – such as the Upper Liard Kaska.⁹⁰

In the intervening years between Teit’s fieldwork and that of John Honigmann, northern BC saw increased southern involvement in northern affairs. This increased southern interest in the North included the increased presence of the RCMP during the 1920s in response to reports of homicides, epidemics, and starvation.⁹¹ Moreover, in 1925, the BC government passed an order-in-council requiring that traplines be registered. The new trapping regulations resulted in increased involvement of both provincial wildlife authorities and federal Indian Affairs authorities in the lives of northern Indigenous peoples. However, the greatest changes in northern BC resulted from changing transportation infrastructure. In 1942, in order to protect Alaska from possible Japanese invasion during the Second World War, the American Army constructed the Alaska Highway. The highway’s construction facilitated easier access to the region. The highway allowed various anthropologists, such as Honigmann, to travel more easily into northern BC and southern Yukon to carry out fieldwork, the significance of which was not lost on the anthropologist. In an article about the highway published in the *Dalhousie Review* in 1944, he wrote:

Hitherto travel in that region had been both difficult and time consuming. At least until the advent of airlines, that region had been practically isolated from outside

⁸⁹ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1915), B635, f14, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 7 September 1915, Telegraph Creek, BC.

⁹⁰ LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, For the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, Meeting with the Casca Tribe or Band of Indians at Telegraph Creek on Monday, 7 June 1915, 11.

⁹¹ Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914-1967*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 155.

contact. Now, however, there is the Alcan or Alaska Highway. Could civilians use a military road for something called anthropological research?⁹²

However, travel along the Alaska Highway was not without its limitations. Since he was travelling along a newly constructed military highway, Honigmann was required to obtain permission from the American army to travel aboard the Greyhound busses that they operated.⁹³ His travel was also eased when a jeep was placed at his disposal by the US Army Air Force. Elaborating on the importance of having access to this vehicle, the anthropologist stated, “This was the only type of vehicle that could have managed to get through the deep mud that paved the rough road running from Muskwa Post Office down to the river.”⁹⁴ Even with the new highway, travel through the region was still an arduous task. Honigmann’s first season of ethnographic fieldwork was with the Fort Nelson Slave in 1943. However, the anthropologist’s fieldwork at Fort Nelson was simply a consolation prize as he was unable to reach the Kaska further down the highway that year.⁹⁵

While this chapter is focused on the ways in which changing transportation infrastructure shaped ethnographic fieldwork, it is also important to acknowledge the fact that the highway affected various cultural aspects and mobility patterns of northern Athapaskan groups. For example, while at Lower Post, Honigmann observed the movement of Tahltan individuals to Watson Lake and back to Telegraph Creek during the summer to participate in the construction of northwest defense projects.⁹⁶ While acknowledging these changes, it is equally important not to overstate the effects the highway’s construction. Historian Ken Coates has argued that the highway

⁹² J.J. Honigmann, “On the Alaska Highway,” *Dalhousie Review* (January 1944): 400.

⁹³ Honigmann, “On the Alaska Highway,” 401.

⁹⁴ John J. Honigmann, *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), 3.

⁹⁵ John Gulik, June Helm, James L. Peacock, and Richard H. Robbins, “John Joseph Honigmann, 1914-1977,” *American Anthropologist* 80, no. 3 (September 1978): 630.

⁹⁶ Smithsonian Institute (SI), National Anthropological Archives (NAA), John Joseph Honigmann Papers, Series 6, Kaska, Box 50, Kaska Journal, 8 September 1945. Tahltan individuals had just quit their job at Watson Lake and were making their way back to Telegraph Creek.

had a relatively small immediate impact on Athapaskan hunting and trapping activities.⁹⁷ Writing about the longer-term effects of the highway's construction, anthropologist Julie Cruikshank has discussed the increased concentration of Indigenous peoples in highway communities and the subsequent growing role that government institutions played in Indigenous lives.⁹⁸

Perhaps the most significant consequence of the highway's construction was the shift away from river transportation. Transportation in and out of the region was no longer as dependent on above-freezing temperatures. The highway facilitated easier winter access to the region, which Honigmann took advantage of in 1945 when he spent part of the winter at Lower Post.⁹⁹ The anthropologist had travelled North to collect data on contemporary Kaska culture for his first monograph on the Kaska, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*. In the process of carrying out this fieldwork, Honigmann also acquired information about pre-contact Kaska. The information that he gathered about pre-contact times was used to write *The Kaska Indians: An Ethnographic Reconstruction*.¹⁰⁰ During the winter, Honigmann was able to learn about Kaska culture, particularly wintertime activities, such as trapping. From one informant, Honigmann implicitly learned about the community dynamics around winter trapping. In late October, the informant expressed concern that another community member had not yet started trapping. The informant proceeded to note that the individual in question had not commenced trapping during the previous year until February.¹⁰¹ Moreover, Honigmann learned in late November that another community

⁹⁷ Kenneth Coates, "The Alaska Highway and the Indians of the Southern Yukon, 1942-50: A Study of Native Adaptation to Northern Development," in *The Alaska Highway: Papers of the 40th Anniversary Symposium*, ed., Kenneth Coates, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1985), 152-156.

⁹⁸ Julie Cruikshank, "The Gravel Magnet: Some Social Impacts of the Alaska Highway on Yukon Indians," in *The Alaska Highway: Papers of the 40th Anniversary Symposium*, ed., Kenneth Coates, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1985), 188-204.

⁹⁹ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 5-6. While 1945 was the first year that Honigmann spent part of the winter with the Kaska, he had also lived with the Kaska during 1944.

¹⁰¹ SI, NAA., John Joseph Honigmann Papers, Series 6, Kaska, Box 50, Personal Data – Various Indians, interview notes, 27 October 1945.

member was complaining that his informant was making the animals too smart to be trapped. As the anthropologist wrote in his notes: “By using small traps, which the animals could easily escape, he has taught them the meaning of traps.”¹⁰² As trapping was generally a winter-time activity, it is not surprising that these finer details about trapping were elucidated during the onset of the winter.

Even prior to the construction of the Alaska Highway, government personnel had established themselves in northern BC. When Teit had travelled north, governmental officials had a limited presence in northern BC. In fact, the McKenna-McBride Commission was in the midst of a whirlwind tour of the region in order to come to terms with Indigenous land use in the region. This situation had largely changed by the time Honigmann had arrived at Fort Nelson in 1943. As a result, Honigmann was also able to glean information from government officials. For example, while resident in Fort Nelson, Honigmann learned from the BC game warden, T. Van Dyke, that the Kaska were distinct from another group referred to as the Nahani – a problematic term to begin with.¹⁰³ However, this transmission of ethnographic knowledge between Van Dyke and Honigmann proved to be of limited value due to the fact that Honigmann contradicted the game warden’s information when writing his ethnographic reconstruction of the Kaska. Honigmann wrote: “In 1943, in Fort Nelson, the writer was assured by the game warden of northern British Columbia that the Nahani was another name for certain Kaska Indians inhabiting the area around Nelson Forks and west of Fort Nelson.”¹⁰⁴

Different routes to the regions inhabited by the Kaska produced interesting insights into neighbouring relations. Not surprisingly, Teit noted the diminishing influence of coastal

¹⁰² SI, NAA, John Joseph Honigmann Papers, Series 6, Kaska, Box 50, Personal Data – Various Indians, interview notes, 23 November 1945.

¹⁰³ SI, NAA, John Joseph Honigmann Papers, Series 13, Correspondence, Box 14, H, J.J. – Journals. Fort Nelson, B.C., 1943, 18 June 1943.

¹⁰⁴ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*. 21.

Indigenous cultural traits as he travelled inland. In particular, Teit suggested that the divide between the Tahltan and Kaska represented a divide between the coastal Tlingit's influence and the influence of other inland Athapaskan and Cree groups. Evidence of this transition from coastal to interior cultural influences was particularly evident to Teit with respect to mythology. Writing from Telegraph Creek in 1915, Teit informed Sapir: "The stories I collected among the Kaska appear to be more thoroughly Athapaskan than those of the Tahltan and are but little influenced by the Tlingit as far as I can judge[.] They also appear to have a slightly closer relationship to the Plateau & Cree stories than the Tahltan stories &c."¹⁰⁵ Teit elaborated on this eastern influence by noting that Kaska material culture also resembled that of indigenous groups to the east. He concluded these thoughts by stating: "I notice evidence of a strong current of influence setting W. from the Mackenzie to the Kaska, the source of it probably coming from the Cree. This influence is noticeable in styles of lodges, snowshoes, moccasins, fleshing tools &c. In many cases the Indians plainly say these styles came from below or the Mackenzie about such & such a time."¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, in the final ethnographic work that Teit wrote about the Tahltan and Kaska, he commented on similarities between the Kaska and the Tahltan. For example, he observed that the Tahltan and Kaska shared similar dialects. Moreover, elaborating on the significance of linguistic similarities among the various Athapaskan groups which he categorized under the broad designation 'Nahani,' Teit suggested that similar dialects were correlated with blood relations between the groups in question.¹⁰⁷ Discussing the historical links in this relationship between the Kaska and the Tahltan, Teit discussed the role that the latter played as middleman traders between

¹⁰⁵ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1915), B635, f14, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 7 September 1915, Telegraph Creek, BC.

¹⁰⁶ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir Correspondences, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1915), B635, f14, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 7 September 1915, Telegraph Creek, BC.

¹⁰⁷ J.A. Teit, "Field Notes on the Tahltan and Kaska Indians: 1912-15," *Anthropologica* (1956) 40 and 43.

the coastal Tlingit and the Kaska.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, Teit's early observations about the cultural influence on the Kaska's eastern neighbours are absent from the final ethnography. Further research into Teit's field notes is necessary in order to better understand the editorial process that resulted in this omission.

Meanwhile, Honigmann noted the existence of consanguineal relationships between the Kaska and the Fort Nelson Slave. For example, one of his informants in Fort Nelson in 1943 was rumoured to have been born in the Liard-Lower Post region. One community member told Honigmann that this informant was a "Grand Laker."¹⁰⁹ According to his published ethnography on the Kaska, one of the easternmost bands of the Kaska referred to as Tse'lona were also known as Grand Lakers.¹¹⁰ Further confusing things, another member of the community informed Honigmann, was that this same informant had a Nahani mother and Slave father.¹¹¹ In this case, the anthropologist may have been conflating the Nahanies – as he understood the term at the time – and Grand Lakers. Nevertheless, it is clear that Honigmann saw a relationship between the easternmost Kaska and the Slave. However, in spite of this link between the Fort Nelson Slave and the Grand Lakers, he also noted that among the Fort Nelson Slave there was a "universal belief in witches" which was "projected ... onto other people," such as the Grand Lakers.¹¹² Discussing the tense relationship that had existed between the two groups, in *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Liard Slave*, Honigmann stated: "To the northwest of Fort Nelson country were the Kaska or Grand Laker, those much feared 'bad people.'"¹¹³ While Teit and Honigmann had approached

¹⁰⁸ Teit, "Field Notes," 95 and 98-99.

¹⁰⁹ SI, NAA, John Joseph Honigmann Papers, Series 13, Correspondence, Box 14, H, J.J. – Journals. Fort Nelson, B.C., 1943, 20 June 1943, p. 34-35.

¹¹⁰ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 21.

¹¹¹ SI, NAA, John Joseph Honigmann Papers, Series 13, Correspondence, Box 14, H, J.J. – Journals. Fort Nelson, B.C., 1943, 24 June 1943, p. 44.

¹¹² SI, NAA, John Joseph Honigmann Papers, Series 13, Correspondence, Box 14, H, J.J. – Journals. Fort Nelson, B.C., 1943, 28 June 1943.

¹¹³ Honigmann, *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave*, 72.

the region inhabited by the Kaska from opposite directions, each anthropologist appears to have been in general agreement that Kaska culture was more influenced by eastern interior groups than western coastal groups. Nevertheless, transportation routes influenced how each anthropologist perceived cultural similarities and differences between the Kaska and their neighbouring groups. Teit saw contrasts in both mythology and material culture between the Tahltan and Kaska, while Honigmann saw a more ambivalent relationship between the Fort Liard Slave and Kaska, including familial relations between the two as well as animosity.

Honigmann's confined travels along the Alaska Highway also influenced his views regarding who fit within the broader ethnographic definition of "Kaska." For example, Honigmann did not consider the Indigenous peoples of the upper Pelly River region to be Kaska. He excluded them from this designation in spite of his informants suggesting that the Frances Lake Kaska understood those of the Pelly River better than they understood the Upper Liard Kaska.¹¹⁴ In spite of one of his informants encouraging Honigmann to travel to Ross River, at the confluence of the Ross and Pelly Rivers, to carry out ethnographic fieldwork, Honigmann never travelled there.¹¹⁵ In spite of the construction of a rough road along the route of the Canol Pipeline during the Second World War, Honigmann may have viewed Ross River and the surrounding region too remote to carry out ethnographic fieldwork.¹¹⁶ His decision not to visit Ross River may have, in turn, affected his ethnographic views.

Conclusion

¹¹⁴ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 22.

¹¹⁵ SI, NAA, John Joseph Honigmann Papers, Series 6, Box 50, Correspondence, Folder 1, [redacted] letter to John J. Honigmann, Upper Liard, YT, 24 February 1950.

¹¹⁶ It should be noted that during the construction of the Canol Pipeline, Indigenous knowledge and their associated land use was a valuable commodity to the survey crews. See: Yukon Archives, Anton Money fonds, 84/76, MSS 169, J. Gordon Turnbull and Sverdup & Parcel, "Diary Report of Reconnaissance Trip: Camp Canol to MacMillan Pass," 1943. This diary reports the use of Indigenous guides. In the process of describing the information communicated from the guides, the surveyors learned about various aspects of land use along the pipeline route. For example, one guide reported trapping beaver along the MacMillan River (10).

Transportation routes and changes in transportation technologies affected the ways in which ethnographers – professional or otherwise – understood Kaska culture and land use. George Dawson, who travelled through the Canadian subarctic during the course of a summer developed an understanding of Kaska culture and land use that was limited by the late arrival of summer in 1887 and the fact that due to the nature of his journey he was not stationary in any particular location for a long time. James Teit's travels were restricted by the season. Due to his reliance on river travel, he had to vacate the North before freeze-up. However, unlike Dawson, Teit was able to remain in one location long enough to gain a more sophisticated understanding of both the Kaska and Tahltan cultures. However, due to his residence in Spence's Bridge in southern BC and the distance required to travel to the Cassiar region, his visits to the North were limited. Just as the timing of Dawson's expedition limited his abilities to meet Indigenous peoples en route, Teit missed out on conducting fieldwork with the Liard Kaska. The Alaska Highway had fairly substantial consequences for conducting ethnographic fieldwork in northern BC and the Yukon. No longer dependent on rivers for transportation, ethnographers could remain in the North during the fall and winter – provided they were still willing to endure the frigid temperatures. This development permitted Honigmann to gain a better understanding of wintertime activities that neither Dawson nor Teit were unable to observe. Moreover, the changing transportation route affected their views of cultural influences on the Kaska and their relations with their neighbours. As each of these ethnographers produced works that appear on the surface to be authoritative descriptions of Kaska culture and traditional territories, their works carry with them implications for future understandings of Aboriginal rights and title. These ethnographies were cited in research reports used to prove Aboriginal rights and title for the purposes of land claim negotiations.

CHAPTER FOUR: “In Time It Could Be Made to Grow Crops”: Narrative

Understandings of Kaska Land Use during the Early 20th Century

The 1916 report of the Royal Commission on Indian Reserves (known as the McKenna-McBride Commission) forecast the decline of the hunting and trapping economy in the Stikine Indian Agency in northwestern British Columbia. In its place, it suggested that the agency's largely Athapaskan population would take up stock-raising supplemented by a limited amount of agricultural pursuits. This prediction was based on a 1915 investigation of the extant and potential Indigenous land use in the Stikine Agency.¹ During the same year anthropologist James Alexander Teit travelled to the Stikine-Cassiar region to carry out anthropological fieldwork on behalf of the Canadian government's Division of Ethnology (part of the Department of Mines). Following his travels to northern British Columbia, this sport hunting guide-turned-anthropologist wrote about a different North. Teit's view of northern British Columbia consisted of Indigenous groups who claimed specific (yet sometimes overlapping) hunting territories, while also maintaining kinship ties and trading relationships with their neighbours. Other than a brief note on the Tahltan's use of horses, stock raising and agriculture warranted no mention.² Each of these views represented simplified versions of a more complicated reality that they encountered. Moreover, both the members of the Royal Commission on Indian Reserves and James Teit approached the topic of Indigenous land use with preconceived notions of northern British Columbia's historical trajectory. Their understandings of the region's past, and more importantly, its future, shaped how they saw Indigenous land use.

¹ Canada, Indian Affairs, *Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia*, Vol. IV, (Victoria, BC, 1916), 745.

² J.A. Teit, "Field Notes on the Tahltan and Kaska Indians: 1912-15," ed., J.H. MacNeish, *Anthropologica* 3 (1956): 39-171.

As both anthropologists and governmental officials endeavoured to understand the Athapaskan cultures of northern British Columbia and the Yukon, they sought to render Indigenous peoples into legible categories. These ethnographic classifications were developed either to facilitate state administration or to fit northern Athapaskan groups into broader ethnographic categorizations. Thus, attempts to make Indigenous peoples legible is representative of political scientist and anthropologist James Scott's state simplifications described in *Seeing Like a State*. Scott had argued that the implementation of centralized government programs resulted in the simplification of a more complex ground truth. He argued that the state undertook a process of standardization in order to render local areas into legible categorizations that could be understood by a sometimes-distant bureaucracy.³ Moreover, and particularly pertinent to this study, Scott noted the constant enmity between the state and "people who move around." He proceeded to suggest that "[e]fforts to permanently settle these mobile peoples (sedentarization) seemed to be a perennial state project—perennial, in part, because it so seldom succeeded."⁴ Consequently, the sedentarization and legibility processes were implicated in each other in an effort to render mobile societies – such as the Kaska – legible to state bureaucrats.⁵ In the case of northern British Columbia, these distant bureaucrats were centred in Victoria and Vancouver in the southern portion of the province when it came to matters of wildlife management, and Ottawa, Ontario when it came to Indian Affairs. North of the sixtieth parallel, in the Yukon (which did not have responsible government until 1979), the bureaucrats were divided between Dawson City, Yukon – the epicentre of the Klondike gold rush – and Ottawa, Ontario.⁶

³ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁴ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 1.

⁵ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 1-2.

⁶ Another work considering the concept of state simplifications in British Columbia is Tina Loo and Meg Stanley, "An Environmental History of Progress: Damming the Peace and Columbia Rivers," *The Canadian Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (September 2011): 399-427.

The process of simplifying a more complicated ground truth, however, was not dominated by the state, as evidenced by the anthropological fieldwork that was undertaken in the region. Anthropologists, such as Teit, had an ambivalent relationship with the state as they sometimes found themselves employed by the Canadian government when carrying out their fieldwork, while simultaneously at odds with various government policies. Teit is a particularly instructive example. Although he was employed by the federal government's Division of Ethnology, Teit was actively involved in assisting the Indigenous peoples of British Columbia to negotiate a treaty with the federal government.⁷ Both anthropologists and Indian Affairs agents sought to understand Indigenous land use, but sought to achieve different ends. These ends in turn influenced the knowledge that they produced about Indigenous peoples. When considering these simplifications, it is important to note that the process was not monopolized by the state. It is equally important to note that when studying the production of state knowledge, the state did not operate as a monolithic entity. Rather, Eurocentric visions simplified the relationships between Indigenous peoples and their environment into manageable units.

In *The Archive of Place*, environmental historian William Turkel suggested that people interpret various 'indexical signs' with a mind towards influencing future developments.⁸ According to Turkel, the land is inscribed with indexical signs, each of which "signifies something else by virtue of a causal or physical relationship between the two."⁹ Additionally, he noted that these indexical signs require interpreters in order to elucidate a place's history.¹⁰ With respect to

⁷ For a more in-depth discussion of Teit's advocacy for Indigenous rights see Peter Campbell, "'Not as a White Man, Not as a Sojourner': James A. Teit and the Fight for Native Rights in British Columbia, 1884-1922," *Left History* 2, no. 2 (1994): 37-57 and Wendy Wickwire, "'We Shall Drink from the Stream and So Shall You': James A. Teit and Native Resistance in British Columbia, 1908-22," *Canadian Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (1998): 199-236.

⁸ William J. Turkel, *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), xix.

⁹ Turkel, *The Archive of Place*, 66.

¹⁰ Turkel, *The Archive of Place*, 66-67.

land use and occupancy, it might be added to Turkel's observations that textual materials represent indexical signs which also require interpretation. Moreover, as anthropologists and state officials endeavoured to understand Indigenous peoples' tribal affiliations and land use and occupancy patterns, they did so by interpreting various ephemeral indexical signs, such as oral narratives provided by informants, through specific lenses.

A particularly strong example of these interpretations of Indigenous land use is demonstrated in the second decade of the twentieth century. This period saw two, relatively concurrent efforts to elucidate Indigenous land use. In 1915, the McKenna-McBride Reserve Commission – often called as the Reserve Commission – travelled to the Stikine Indian Agency in order to obtain information for the creation of reserves for the region's various Indigenous groups. As historian Brenda Ireland has noted, the Reserve Commission was established in 1913 to make recommendations concerning extant land claim issues.¹¹ Meanwhile, in 1912 and 1915, anthropologist James Teit travelled to the same region in order to produce an ethnographic work on the various Athapaskan groups for the newly formed Anthropological Division of the Geological Survey of Canada.¹² Both Teit and the members of the reserve commission endeavoured to interpret the information provided to them by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike in order to develop an understanding of the environment and land use in the Stikine-Cassiar region.

Narrative was a formative lens through which both Teit and the Reserve Commission members viewed land use. As environmental historian William Cronon has suggested, the trajectory of a narrative is influenced by the way in which it is framed. In his influential article, "A

¹¹ Brenda Ireland, "'Working a Great Hardship on Us': First Nations People, the State, and Fur-bearer Conservation in British Columbia Prior to 1930," *Native Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (1996): 69.

¹² Judy Thompson, *Recording Their Story: James Teit and the Tahltan*, (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007), 45-47.

Place for Stories,” Cronon analyzed the framing of progressive and declensionist narratives in the American West. Within the context of the Great Plains, he posited that divisions between progressive and declensionist narratives were rooted in the way authors conceived of the environment: as a wasted land in need of being rendered productive by humans or as a formerly ecologically complex land that was despoiled by humans. Moreover, in analysing Richard White’s *The Roots of Dependence*, Cronon noted the emergence of alternative plot lines for scholars focusing on Indigenous peoples, which examined the erosion of their homelands.¹³ According to Cronon, White’s plot ended where other historians’ plots began. As Cronon wrote: “As for the scene of this plot, we have already encountered it in a different guise. The ‘wilderness’ in which the progressive frontier narrators begin their stories is nothing less than the destroyed remnant of the Pawnees’ home. It is less a wasteland than a land that has been wasted.”¹⁴ Of course, it would be too simple to disentangle the declensionist narratives of the loss of Indigenous homelands and the subsequent progressive or declensionist narratives of resource use. While narratives have been powerful tools for historians, they were also factors in the production of knowledge by Indian Affairs officials and anthropologists in the Canadian subarctic.¹⁵

The Kaska Experience the McKenna-McBride Commission

In September 1912, J.A.J. McKenna – who had been appointed special commissioner of Indian affairs by Conservative Prime Minister Robert Borden – signed an agreement with British Columbian premier Richard McBride. This agreement aimed to settle the disagreements between the federal and provincial governments regarding Indigenous lands and affairs within British

¹³ William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *The Journal of American History*, 78.4 (March 1992): 1347-1376.

¹⁴ Cronon, “A Place for Stories,” 1366.

¹⁵ The use of narratives to understand the environment could likely be extended to a multitude of other groups as well, such as the scientific community. As Turkel has suggested in *The Archive of Place* in relation to the proposed Prosperity Mine, “As the estimated value of the potential mine increased, each of these groups tried to determine the future of the region, in part by reconstructing its past” (xx).

Columbia. Without raising the issues of land title, treaties, or Indigenous self-government, a royal commission was to be created with the powers to resize existing Indian reserves – such as those previously created by the 1876 Joint Indian Reserve Commission – and create new reserves. The British Columbian government agreed that title would be conveyed to Indian reserves. This commission, commonly referred to as the McKenna-McBride Commission, was to protect Indigenous peoples from seeing their reserve land reduced in the future. From 1913 until 1916, the members of the reserve commission held hearings pertaining the establishment of Indian reserves throughout British Columbia.¹⁶

While the McKenna-McBride Reserve Commission was at Telegraph Creek in June 1915, remarkably little information was gathered pertaining to Kaska land use. Similar to the line of questioning with the Tahltan – a neighbouring group to the Kaska – Packer Johnny, the witness for the “Casca” band faced questions concerning the location of their homes. In response to the question, “Where do you make your homes[?]” W. Scott Simpson, the Stikine Agency Indian Agent, interjected, stating: “They go in the woods all over – and they live in tents. Some times [sic] they come to the store to do a little trading and go off again in the woods. I came down there once to see them but could not find anyone at home.”¹⁷ It was also established that the Kaska lived by hunting and trapping – not a particularly surprising revelation for Indigenous peoples in the subarctic. It should also be noted that while the Commission met with a representative of what was subsequently designated by anthropologists such Honigmann as the ‘Kaska proper,’ they failed to connect with any members of the Liard band, who are also associated with the larger Kaska

¹⁶ Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), 88-89; Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 228-230; Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia: The Impact of the White Man*, New Edition, (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1997), 93-94.

¹⁷ LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, For the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, Meeting with the Casca Tribe or Band of Indians at Telegraph Creek on Monday, 7 June 1915, p. 11.

Nation.¹⁸ Given the sparse information gathered by the commission members while in the Stikine Agency, it is necessary to turn to the evidence provided by Simpson while he was in Victoria in order to ascertain what Indian Affairs actually knew (or thought they knew) about the Kaska and land use in northern British Columbia and what their future visions they had for the Kaska and their lands. In discussing the Kaska, Simpson was asked about their access to religion, schools, and doctors. When the Indian Agent answered that the Kaska had access to none of these, it was suggested by the interviewer and affirmed by Simpson that the Kaska “are just wild aboriginals.”¹⁹ This description set the scene for the narrative arc that the Reserve Commission members sought to impose on the Kaska. Through this information-gathering endeavour, the members of the McKenna-McBride Reserve Commission cast the Kaska as a band of nomadic and wild aboriginals, devoid of religion, schools, and doctors.

As ethnohistorian John Lutz has argued in *Makúk*, Europeans delegitimized Indigenous land use and land title based on how they worked the land. As Lutz argues in his history of Indigenous labour in British Columbia, Europeans viewed labour as the source of ownership rights, as based on the philosophy of English philosopher John Locke. To use one’s labour to attain property rights it was necessary to sufficiently remove items from their “state[s] of nature.” To this end, Indigenous labour was not deemed to be ‘real’ labour within the definition of classical economics. This view in turn was used to justify the appropriation of Indigenous lands.²⁰ By casting the Kaska as wild nomads, it was implicitly suggested that they did not work the land sufficiently to have title to the land. This line of thought was also rooted in Judeo-Christian

¹⁸ LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, For the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, Meeting with the Casca Tribe or Band of Indians at Telegraph Creek on Monday, 7 June 1915, 11; John Joseph Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: An Ethnographic Reconstruction*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 19.

¹⁹ LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, Meeting with W. Scott Simpson, Indian Agent for the Stikine Agency at the Board Room, Victoria, BC on Tuesday, January 18th, 1916 as to the reserves in his Agency, p. 49.

²⁰ John Sutton Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 6-7.

conceptions of proper forms of land use, largely rooted in agricultural or pastoral pursuits.²¹ In this respect, the presentation of the Kaska as nomads went hand-in-hand with the representation of their having no religion (i.e., Christianity).

Concomitant to the reserve question, the McKenna-McBride Commission was also interested in the acculturation of Indigenous peoples and the opening of the region's land to Euro-Canadians. As anthropologist Wilson Duff has noted, the commission came about in 1912 as the BC government had requested reductions in reserve sizes. Thus, the Reserve Commission was appointed in order "to make the final and complete allotment of Indian lands in the province."²² The drive to free up land for use by Euro-Canadians is evident in Duff's analysis of the Reserve Commission. Meanwhile, the Reserve Commission's goal of acculturating Indigenous peoples is revealed through the commission's collection of evidence and the process of determining the locations and sizes of reserves. When gathering information on land use, the commission considered how future land use in northern British Columbia would look.

The reserve selection process sheds important light onto the narrative trajectory embraced by members of the Reserve Commission. Given the small size of the reserves – often around 160 acres²³ – the commission was clearly not seeking to set aside large tracts of lands for the purposes of hunting and trapping. While there was some consideration of fishing sites,²⁴ agricultural and

²¹ In *Civilizing the Wilderness: Culture and Nature in Pre-Confederation Canada and Rupert's Land*, (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2012), A.A. den Otter discusses the link between the spread of agriculture and the spread of Christianity through pre-Confederation Canada. He discusses the Christian idea of turning the wilderness into a garden and the link that missionaries made between colonizing, developing, and Christianizing the land. Moreover, similar to Lutz, den Otter states that Indigenous peoples were deemed to be uncivilized due to the apparent crudeness of their agricultural techniques. Finally, Europeans believed that agriculture would replace hunting in North America (3-4). Meanwhile, in *The Other Side of Eden: Hunters, Farmers and the Shaping of the World*, (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), Hugh Brody also connects the spread of agriculture and pastoralism to Judeo-Christian values. Through a careful examination of the book of Genesis, Brody connects Judeo-Christian agriculture and its spread through much of the globe to a series of curses handed down by God throughout the first book of the Bible (67-101).

²² Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia*, 94.

²³ Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission*, 752-753.

²⁴ LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, Stikine Agency, 65.

ranching pursuits were a strong consideration in the reserve selection process. For example, when Simpson was asked about the agricultural potential of a reserve site selected at McDames Creek, he answered: “Of course it is crude land and in time it could be made to grow crops.”²⁵ Additionally, when discussing another potential reserve site along Dease River, Simpson stated of the place: “That is a meeting place of the Indians – it is a great big flat; it is a large level piece of land used as a camping ground and if there is any possible chance of any land in that section of the country being used for agricultural purposes that is the best spot that I know of; it is level, and if the frosts could be overcome it would be very good land. It looks like a park.”²⁶ This potential reserve site represents a certain degree of nuance in Simpson’s knowledge of the Kaska as he identified the potential reserve location as both an existing camp site as well as a future agricultural site. Additionally, a reserve was considered for Horse Ranch Pass in order to provide the Kaska with horse and cattle grazing country.²⁷ While there was strong desire to draw the Indigenous peoples of the Stikine Agency into agricultural and ranching activities, this focus does not mean that the Simpson was unaware of the potential challenges of undertaking such pursuits in a subarctic environment. When asked about the agricultural potential of a reserve site for the Liard band, he stated: “Were it not for the frost it is quite possible that it could be cultivated.”²⁸ Thus, due to a combination of the hurried nature of the Reserve Commission as it applied to northern BC and its strong focus on reorienting Indigenous land use towards pursuits deemed more appropriate to Euro-Canadians, little information was rendered pertaining to Indigenous land use as it existed in 1915. Rather, Commission members conceived Indigenous land use as it ought to be.

²⁵ LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, Stikine Agency, 66.

²⁶ LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, Stikine Agency, 67.

²⁷ LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, Stikine Agency, 69-70.

²⁸ LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, Stikine Agency, 71.

The narrative trajectory that Reserve Commission officials perceived with respect to the Kaska, and the Stikine Indian Agency in general, was further reinforced by commission's final report. This report laid out which sites were selected for reserves, the purpose that each reserve would serve, and a declaration regarding the approval or rejection of each proposed reserve site.²⁹ Moreover, the report laid out the commission members' views of the present state of Indigenous land use and their predictions concerning the region's future:

The Stikine Indians until now have lived almost exclusively by hunting and trapping; and this field of their old activities constantly becoming more circumscribed and their operations less productive, their future natural avocation would appear to be stock raising and such limited farming as the latitude of their habitat and the generally poor quality of its soil render possible. In the allotment of Reserves by the Commission this fact has obtained special consideration.³⁰

While recognizing the environmental limitations of northern British Columbia for agricultural pursuits, government official nevertheless sought to reorganize Indigenous livelihoods and land use patterns away from that of hunting and trapping towards a Eurocentric approach to land use. Focusing on future land use – as they thought it should look – the information obtained and produced by the members of the Reserve Commission was limited by their myopic vision. Rather than attaining an understanding of the interactions between Indigenous peoples – such as the Kaska – and the environment, they focused primarily on interpreting the land itself. They viewed the land through a Eurocentric lens which sought to understand the land as it would be used by Euro-Canadians.

Only on rare occasions did the commission offer insights into extant Kaska land use. These moments of insight reflected circumstances where a site of prior Kaska land use coincided with the Reserve Commission's perceived future land use. An example of these more nuanced insights

²⁹ Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission*, 747-755.

³⁰ Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission*, 745.

emerged when Simpson was questioned about a potential reserve site at the confluence of the Dease River and McDames Creek. While discussions pertaining to site were predominantly focused on the agricultural potential of the land (with less than sanguine hopes for the land), the conversation also covered the “actual value” of the 160-acre parcel of land to the Kaska. In response to this enquiry, Simpson stated that the site held value, “Only as a camping ground and meeting place. They put up caches here in which they store their food and besides they are near a trading post.”³¹ Moreover, when questioned about the site’s fishing potential, Simpson noted that while the actual potential reserve was not a good fishing site, for better fishing “you have to go up the river.”³² At the conclusion of the Reserve Commission, this reserve site was approved, but reduced to roughly an 80-acre parcel of land.³³ An additional example of the coincidental overlapping of extant land use with potential future agricultural land use was provided by Simpson in his evaluation of another 160-acre parcel of land located on the Dease River, below its confluence with Rapid River, which was both a meeting place and had agricultural potential.³⁴ This parcel of land was approved as a reserve lot in the final report of the Reserve Commission.³⁵ Thus, in the members of the Reserve Commission’s efforts to direct future Kaska land use, Simpson offered glimpses into extant Kaska land use. In these instances when knowledge about existing Kaska land use dovetailed with governmental visions for future Indigenous land use, the

³¹ LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, Meeting with W. Scott Simpson, Indian Agent for the Stikine Indian Agency at the Board Room, Victoria, BC, on Tuesday, January 18th, 1916 as to the Reserves in his Agency, 66.

³² LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, Meeting with W. Scott Simpson, Indian Agent for the Stikine Indian Agency at the Board Room, Victoria, BC, on Tuesday, January 18th, 1916 as to the Reserves in his Agency, 66.

³³ Canada, *Report on the Commission on Indian Affairs*, 752.

³⁴ LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, Meeting with W. Scott Simpson, Indian Agent for the Stikine Indian Agency at the Board Room, Victoria, BC, on Tuesday, January 18th, 1916 as to the Reserves in his Agency, 67.

³⁵ Canada, *Report on the Commission on Indian Affairs*, 752.

information produced related to site-specific land use. Meanwhile, this process ignored Kaska land use on a larger scale, consequently limiting broader understandings of Kaska traditional territory.

While it would be easy to characterize the commission and its members as a monolithic entity seeking to displace Indigenous culture, this portrayal would belie the complex range of views of the commission members and their views on Indigenous culture. For example, correspondence between James Teit and Edward Sapir suggest that Commissioner J.A.J. McKenna was opposed to the government policy of banning the potlatch. Teit noted that McKenna “has a great deal of sympathy with the Indians.”³⁶ These sympathies notwithstanding, the Reserve Commission sought to reorient Kaska lifestyle and land use.

In order to understand the narrative trajectory premised on the decline of the Indigenous hunting and trapping economy and the rise of Euro-centric concepts of land use and land tenure in northern British Columbia, it is important to understand how both the British Columbian and Canadian governments came to understand the region and the direction in which it was heading. The correspondence of the Provincial Game Warden in the years leading up to the McKenna-McBride commission is particularly instructive. Correspondence between Simpson and the Provincial Game Warden A. Bryan Williams sheds light not only on how the provincial government understood land use in northern British Columbia, but also how the federal Department of Indian Affairs understood land use and how these understandings were communicated between the different levels of government. Provincial Game Warden correspondence also demonstrates how individuals on the ground in northern British Columbia shaped, and sometimes resisted, the conceptualizations of northern Indigenous land use subscribed to by southern bureaucrats such as Williams.

³⁶ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir’s Correspondence, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1913-1914), B635, f13, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 5 August 1914, Spences Bridge, BC.

While holding seemingly contrary views of Indigenous land use in northern British Columbia to that of both the provincial and federal governments, James Teit was active in shaping these understandings. In 1908, prior to his official ethnographic fieldwork among the Athapaskans on behalf of Edward Sapir, Teit provided Williams with information concerning distribution of Indigenous groups as well as their estimated population numbers.³⁷ Teit placed the population of the “Casca & other Nahane” at approximately 400 people or more.³⁸ Elaborating on what he knew about the population of the province’s Indigenous peoples, Teit stated:

The following is a fairly close estimation of the population of the various Indian tribes in B.C. Some are my own estimates, and others are those of the Indian Department census. Some are a combination of both, and some from the extreme N.E. are estimates partly of Father Morice & partly from hunters & Traders. The figures are say for the year 1906. There is hardly any change since then. The bands of Crees, Shuswap & Iroquois around Yellowhead Pass, & the Athapaskans & Tlingit of the extreme North & North East not being treaty Indians nor under the direct control of the Indian department their numbers are not known but they are few in numbers, and the estimates of them I think are nearly correct. Their being more or less completely nomadic renders them also more difficult to estimate. I give the numbers on a separate sheet as this page is now too crowded.³⁹

The information provided to the provincial government by Teit represents an effort to render the British Columbia’s Indigenous population into legible categories. However, the correspondence reveals the unreliability of these categorizations. Unfortunately, the map provided by Teit does not appear to have survived.

Perhaps a more instructive understanding of land use during the Reserve Commission hearings are found in the representations of Athapaskan wildlife harvesting practices that came out of the North. Southern bureaucrats often held a negative view of Indigenous wildlife harvesting

³⁷ British Columbia Archives (BCA), British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, RG-0466, Box 16, File 2, James A. Teit letter to A. Bryan Williams, Spences Bridge, BC, 20 January 1908; James A. Teit “Populations of Indian Tribes in BC, 1906.”

³⁸ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, RG-0466, Box 16, File 2, James A. Teit “Populations of Indian Tribes in BC, 1906.”

³⁹ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, RG-0466, Box 16, File 2, James A. Teit letter to A. Bryan Williams [fragment], n.d.

practices which reflected a general antipathy towards the holding of common property by Indigenous peoples.⁴⁰ Environmental historian John Sandlos has discussed how such views have been used to delegitimize Indigenous forms of land tenure.⁴¹ In a letter to Teit, Williams wrote unsympathetically about the Liard Kaska's potential need for relief: "With regard to Mr Hyland's letter I can say this much that if the Liard Indians are in want it is the duty of the Dominion Government to feed them, but personally I cannot see how they can suffer as they can get all the moose and caribou they want as far as groceries and clothes ar[e] concerned they c[a]n surely trap enough fox, lynx and marten to supply these wants."⁴² While on the surface Williams's letter does not necessarily reflect the narrative of a declining hunting and trapping economy, this statement is more reflective of a provincial government unwilling to take on the responsibility of providing assistance to Indigenous peoples.

In other correspondence Williams demonstrated a much deeper concern for the conservation of the province's northern wildlife resources. This concern for animals came at the expense of Indigenous harvesting practices. In 1908 and 1909, while engaging George Adsit – a trapper living in the Stikine region – as a Deputy Game Warden, Williams voiced his concern for wasteful Indigenous hunting practices. Williams appointed Adsit as a Deputy Game Warden in

⁴⁰ In "Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance in Kahnawá:ke Mowahw Territory, 1850-1900," *Canadian Historical Review* 95, no. 3 (September 2014): 352-381, Daniel Rueck has described government attempts to dismantle Mohawk common property. Rueck contextualized enclosure efforts in Kahnawá:ke within the broader enclosures movement that had occurred in Britain. Subsequent to the enclosures described by Rueck and described in this dissertation, Garrett Hardin published a defense of enclosures and a critique of common property in "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968): 1243-1248. However, Hardin's description of common property has proven to be problematic. As Rueck has written: "Although such common property regimes have been characterized by Garret Haradin and others as ungoverned spaces in which self-interested individuals tend to overexploit the land, users of commons around the world have carefully regulated their collective and individual actions to ensure sustainable use over long periods of time. Periods of chaotic open-access occur only when collective governance structures break down and individual land users can exploit the land without considering the requirements of other users" (354-355).

⁴¹ John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 237-238.

⁴² BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, RG-0466, Box 16, File 2, A. Bryan Williams letter to James A. Teit, 31 January 1908.

order to prevent the Tlingit from Alaska from hunting and trapping in British Columbia. Since Adsit had already made plans to trap in the Taku River region, it was believed that he would be able to enforce the province's game laws in the region. While preventing the Alaskan Tlingit from harvesting wildlife in British Columbia was the primary motive for Adsit's appointment, Williams made additional requests of the trapper: "Will you please report to me on your return in detail all you have done during your trip, and you ill also endeavour [t]o stop the excessive slaughter of game by our own Indians, and also any sale of game heads that may be going on."⁴³ In a subsequent letter to Adsit, the Provincial Game Warden elaborated on this request:

As regards your other duties, I want you to do your best to influence our Indians not to kill more game than is absolutely necessary and to use the entire carcass of any animal killed. They are not to kill sheep out of season any more than a white man , [sic] I am especially desirous of this being enforced as I believe that sheep stand more in need of protection than any other animal up there. I have also reason to believe that a few heads of mountain caribou are sold up there I should like you to do what you can towards stopping this. It has also been reported that some of the men working on the Telegraph line do a lot of sheep hunting during the summer, this is also a matter you might be able to look into.⁴⁴

While this statement is likely in reference to the Tahltan residing within the Stikine River watershed, it nevertheless reflects the provincial government's views of Indigenous wildlife harvesting practices in northern British Columbia. This view of Indigenous hunting practices, coupled with the concern over the illicit sale of caribou heads, also reflects the British Columbian government's conceptualization of the region as an important sport hunting ground.⁴⁵ As the

⁴³ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 17, File 4, A. Bryan Williams letter to George Adsit, Vancouver, BC, 20 August 1908.

⁴⁴ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 17, File 4, A. Bryan Williams letter to George Adsit, Vancouver, BC, 3 November 1908.

⁴⁵ For a more thorough discussion on sport hunting in British Columbia during the late eighteenth and early to mid nineteenth centuries see Tina Loo, "Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in British Columbia, 1880-1939," *Western Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 296-319. Meanwhile in "Imbricated Geographies of Conservation and Consumption in the Stikine Plateau," *Environment and History* 17, no. 4 (November 2011): 555-581, Jonathan Peyton examines how discourse and conservation practices shaped the Stikine's physical landscape during the early twentieth century. As Peyton wrote: "My argument is that the combination of a multi-layered state-sponsored conservation initiative and the strengthening of a nascent hunting industry altered the ecology of the region.

government of British Columbia sought to reorient northern British Columbia into a destination for sport hunters, a narrative of wasteful and improvident Indigenous hunters emerged.

George Adsit, for his part, combatted this narrative. In a letter to Williams written in January 1909, the trapper stated: “I think you have been misinformed in regard to these indians [sic] killing more than they can use as I have found them very Careful in not wasting any meat, in fact they are more careful than any indian [sic] I ever saw on this matter.”⁴⁶ The opinions of George Adsit with respect to Indigenous wildlife harvesting and, concomitantly, land use and occupancy, is particularly important as he not only contributed to shaping governmental understandings of land use, but also served as an informant for anthropologists James Teit and John Honigmann.⁴⁷ In spite of Adsit’s efforts, the narrative of wasteful Indigenous hunters was strongly entrenched within the minds of many state administrators.⁴⁸

The information provided by individuals such as Teit and Adsit likely played some role in shaping both provincial and federal governmental views of the future of Indigenous hunting and trapping activities in northern British Columbia. However, their perspectives on Indigenous subsistence practices also competed with more negative views of Indigenous harvesting practices.

Correspondingly, Tahltan life-ways changed as they were brought into the hunting industry as experts and labourers and as the state enacted new regulations as to how they could interact with the environment around them” (558). Peyton also notes that in the process of shaping the Stikine region as a sport hunting region, along with the conservationist initiatives that accompany the industry, Indigenous peoples’ wildlife harvesting practices were challenged as they simultaneously were drawn into new economic opportunities presented by the developing sport hunting industry (559).

⁴⁶ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 17, File 4, George E. Adsit letter to A. Bryan Williams, Telegraph Creek, BC, 4 January 1909.

⁴⁷ J.A. Teit, “Field Notes on the Tahltan and Kaska Indians: 1912-15,” 40. More research into Teit’s unpublished fieldnotes is required in order to determine the extent of information gleaned from Adsit that pertains to the Kaska. According to Teit: “I ... received information on certain points from George Adsit, who has lived a number of years among the Tahltan and can speak their language. (He has also a knowledge of Cree and at least some knowledge of the Athapaskan dialects spoken by the tribes lying between the Cree and Tahltan, having lived among the Indians in this little-known region for several years.)” (40). In *The Kaska Indians*, John Joseph Honigmann noted that Adsit had informed “the writer that the Kaska Indians had known moose ‘a long, long time ago’” (14-15).

⁴⁸ Peyton, “Imbricated Geographies,” 555-581.

Correspondence between Simpson and Williams provide important insights into how the federal and provincial governments viewed Indigenous land use. Simpson's perspective on Indigenous land use was generally sympathetic toward the protection of Indigenous hunting and trapping pursuits. However, he was also fearful that their harvesting practices, coupled with and influenced by Euro-Canadian and Euro-American harvesting practices, would result in the demise of the hunting and trapping economy. An example of this perceived symbiotic journey towards the destruction of the region's furbearing population is provided in a letter written from Simpson to Williams during the summer of 1912:

I have for some time been in Communication with the Department of Indian Affairs ,Ottawa [sic], with regard to a complaint made be [sic] the Indians of this District against the indiscriminate use of Poison in the taking of Fur bearing Animals , [sic] the Practice is prevalent both with the Indians and Whites and the result is that large tracts of Country are now swept clear of every lining [sic] thing in the shape of Fur bearing animals. The Indians themselves realise that a continuance of this practice will rapidly ruin the whole Country as a preserve. and [sic] are now clamoring for aid from the Government to suppress the sale and use of this noxious scourge. White Men are in the habit of coming into the District from Wrangel [sic] and other places ,early [sic] in the season and seeking employment with a view to remaining in the Country for the Trapping Season, and all are abundantly supplied with Poison which they bring from Wrangell. Some of these Men are careless and frequently lose poison bates [sic] which are picked up by Fur bearing animals and carried some distance before the poison takes effect, these Animals which are lost are eaten by others , [sic] and the result is that more Furs are lost than secured, and the country is swept clear,Meanwhile [sic] the Huntre [sic] shifts camp to another locality and repeats the trick ad libitum, [sic] Would you kindly take the matter up with the Provincial Authorities and see if any thing [sic] can be done to remedy the situation, [sic] You will greatly oblige me by moving in this important matter.⁴⁹

While demonstrating that the use of poison for trapping was practiced by both Euro-Americans and Indigenous peoples, Simpson also noted that the Indigenous peoples wished to see an end to this trapping tactic. Elaborating on the trapping situation in a subsequent letter, Simpson stated that the Tahltan chief was "urging his people to cease using poison, and they are all anxious to

⁴⁹ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 36, File 10, W. Scott Simpson letter to A. Bryan Williams, Telegraph Creek, BC, 22 July 1912.

stop I provided that the White Man will follow suit.”⁵⁰ He also noted that the continued practice of using poison would deplete the Cassiar region of silver and black foxes.⁵¹ While this correspondence concerned the Kaska’s neighbours, the Tahltan, it nevertheless influenced how northern hunting and trapping would be perceived by southern bureaucrats. Moreover, the paucity of references to the Kaska on the Liard River watershed reveals the inchoate nature of government knowledge and control of the region east of the Stikine watershed. However, the Kaska were completely beyond the gaze of Indian Affairs. For example, in September of 1914, Simpson wrote to Williams explaining that he had travelled “to the Liard and Mc Dames Creek Quarter” to explain the British Columbia Game Act to the Kaska.⁵²

A series of correspondence between Duncan C. Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, and A. Bryan Williams sheds more light on the ways in which both Indian Affairs and the British Columbia Game Department viewed the future of the Indigenous hunting and trapping economy in northern British Columbia. In 1914, Scott appealed to Williams that the latter’s department should exercise less rigidity in its enforcement of game laws when it came to the province’s Indigenous peoples. Citing the declining fur prices rendering them “comparatively valueless” and the diminishing “earning capacity of the Indian whose only means of livelihood is trapping,” Scott suggested that Indigenous peoples would “be compelled to follow the pursuit of game for food with greater thoroughness than previously.”⁵³ Scott concluded the letter by requesting the British Columbian government “to modify the game laws in such a manner as to

⁵⁰ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 36, File 10, W. Scott Simpson letter to A. Bryan Williams, Telegraph Creek, 2 August 1912.

⁵¹ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 36, File 10, W. Scott Simpson letter to A. Bryan Williams, Telegraph Creek, 2 August 1912.

⁵² BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 47, File 13, W. Scott Simpson letter to A. Bryan Williams, Telegraph Creek, BC, 16 September 1914.

⁵³ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 51, File 8, Duncan C. Scott letter to A. Bryan Williams, Ottawa, Ontario, 10 September 1914.

give the Indian a better opportunity of supporting himself and family during the present winter.”⁵⁴ However, Williams offered a different perspective using examples from northern British Columbia. While stating that the Indigenous peoples in the northern part of the province already enjoyed special privileges, Williams struck a less than sympathetic tone with respect to their abilities to pursue a livelihood. Williams argued “that these northern Indians, who do trapping, in a great many instances do not deserve any consideration at all. Many of them are extremely well to do, so much so that the Talton [sic] Indians at Telegraph Creek, who hire out as guides, ask from \$7.00 to \$10.00 a day, and are very indifferent as to whether they go or not at even this figure.”⁵⁵ Moreover, Williams noted that hunters in the Stikine region “were treated with great insolence” by their Indigenous guides.⁵⁶ Williams concluded by stating:

It, therefore, appears to me that if the Indians are so indifferent to earning money they cannot possibly be in such great distress. Of course, I do not mean to say that this applies to the whole Province, though it does to a great extent. There is no doubt that some of the Indians in the northern interior are dependent upon their trapping. I have a pretty good knowledge of who these Indians are. It has been my custom, and will be in future, to treat them as leniently [sic] as it is advisable to do so.

I must, however, say that I do not consider it advisable to allow a general laxity of the enforcement of the game laws amongst the Indians. At the present time, after years of difficulty, I have succeeded in getting a fairly good observance of the game laws and to relax now would simply mean that all the good that has been done would be nullified and that there would be more trouble in future for the Indians as well as my Officers.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 51, File 8, Duncan C. Scott letter to A. Bryan Williams, Ottawa, Ontario, 10 September 1914.

⁵⁵ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 51, File 8, A. Bryan Williams letter to Duncan C. Scott, Vancouver, BC, 16 September 1914.

⁵⁶ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 51, File 8, A. Bryan Williams letter to Duncan C. Scott, Vancouver, BC, 16 September 1914.

⁵⁷ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0466, Box 51, File 8, A. Bryan Williams letter to Duncan C. Scott, Vancouver, BC, 16 September 1914.

While not dismissing the impending crisis facing Indigenous trappers, Williams emphasised the importance of maintaining the apparently hard-won authority of the game officers in northern British Columbia.

Both provincial and federal governmental agents viewed the Indigenous hunting and trapping lifestyle in the North to be in turmoil. While there may not have been a consensus on whether this lifestyle was moribund, the results of the McKenna-McBride Reserve Commission clearly held this view. The situation was viewed less as a crisis and more as an opportunity to enact acculturative policies on the region's Indigenous peoples, such as the Kaska. As a result, the selection of reserves sites was based less on past Kaska approaches to land tenure, but oriented to prospective future land uses. In her article "Working a Great Hardship on Us," historian Brenda Ireland has suggested that the Reserve Commission was a way for Indigenous peoples to express grievances within the context of settling land issues. She stated that "First Nations submissions delineated how land appropriation was leaving them without sufficient land to make a living, yet Indians were prohibited by the game laws from hunting and fishing."⁵⁸ While the Reserve Commission offered many Indigenous groups an opportunity to air grievances, this situation did not emerge for the Kaska. The meagre quantity of testimony obtained from the Kaska allowed government agents to control the narrative of perceived past and future land use in the Liard region. Moreover, what little information was gathered from the Kaska in northern British Columbia was androcentric, concealing the land use patterns of Athapaskan women.

Of course, agriculture and ranching in no way displaced the trapping economy in the Canadian subarctic. However, with the persistence of the trapping economy, there was nevertheless an effort to reorient Indigenous land use patterns towards those of Euro-Canadians.

⁵⁸ Ireland, "Working a Great Hardship on Us," 68.

In 1925, the BC government passed an order-in-council that required people to register their traplines.⁵⁹ While certain Indigenous groups desired to possess group traplines, Indian Affairs personnel sought to establish individual ownership of traplines. In this respect, while Indian Affairs' prognostications forecasting the end of the northern Indigenous peoples' hunting and gather economies proved wrong, the narrative drive towards land use patterns more reflective of Euro-Canadian approaches persisted, even if not as originally envisioned by the members of the McKenna-McBride Commission.

The Kaska and James A. Teit

James Teit's ethnographic research with the Kaska and Tahltan had been influenced by seasonality, transportation routes, and transportation technology. In addition to the physical environment, Teit's anthropological work was also shaped by his preconceived notions. In particular, his perception of the course of history in northern British Columbia determined what information should be gathered regarding the northern Athapaskans.

Cognizant of change on the horizon, Teit was interested in salvage ethnography and sought to ascertain northern Athapaskan 'traditional' culture and delineate band affiliations. His interpretations of 'indexical signs' also represents the imposition of a narrative structure on the Athapaskans of the Stikine Indian Agency. Edward Sapir, in writing to Teit about the latter's planned journey to the Stikine region in the late summer and early fall of 1912, suggested, "While your present trip is of course to be one chiefly of reconnaissance, I think it would be a good idea if you can keep a weather eye on some one particular Athabaskan tribe with a view to future working up in monograph detail. How would the Tahltan do? Perhaps the Sicannie would be a

⁵⁹ Ireland, "Working a Great Hardship on Us," 76-77.

better example of a typical relatively uninfluenced Athabaskan tribe.”⁶⁰ This instruction suggests that while sharing the view of the members of the Reserve Commission that Indigenous culture was in decline, Teit and his anthropological colleagues were motivated to acquire different information on land use to that of the commission. While adopting a similar narrative trajectory to those of Indian Affairs and others seeking the acculturation of Indigenous peoples, Teit – as a proponent of Indigenous land rights who appreciated Indigenous culture⁶¹ – inverted the progressive narrative of acculturation that had framed the Indian Affairs agents’ understandings of land use. Rather, as evidenced by his views concerning the banning of the potlatch, he viewed the loss and suppression of Indigenous culture as something to be lamented.⁶² Thus, the process of acculturation was viewed through the lens of a declensionist narrative. As Teit feared the loss of Indigenous culture, he looked to the past. The anthropologist sought to acquire information relating to Athapaskan cultures as they once were.

There were tensions, however, within this narrative when it came to Teit’s pursuit of ethnographic data and artifacts. Just as McKenna’s sympathies towards Indigenous peoples and his opposition regarding the suppression of the potlatch serves as a warning against viewing the agents of Indian Affairs as monolithic entities and challenges the progressive narrative of acculturation even within the ranks of Indian Affairs, there were nuances within the declensionist

⁶⁰ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir’s Correspondence, I-A-236M, B635, f12, Edward Sapir letter to James A. Teit, 22 July 1912, Ontario.

⁶¹ For more on Teit’s involvement in lobbying for Indigenous land rights see: Wendy Wickwire, “‘We Shall Drink from the Stream and So Shall You’: James A. Teit and Native Resistance in British Columbia, 1908-22,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (June 1998): 199-236; Peter Campbell, “‘Not as a White Man, Not as a Sonourner’: James A. Teit and the Fight for Native Rights in British Columbia, 1884-1922,” *Left History* 2, no. 2 (1994): 37-57; Robert G. Adlam, “The Northern Athabaskan Survey of Edward Sapir and James A. Teit,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 49, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 99-117.

⁶² Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir’s Correspondence, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1913-1914), B635, f13, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 18 December 1913, Spences Bridge, BC; James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 8 January 1914, Spences Bridge, BC; James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 5 August 1914, Spences Bridge, BC.

narratives offered by salvage anthropologists. For example, following his 1912 fieldwork among the Tahltan, Teit lamented the reluctance of the Tahltan to sell him artifacts, noting that:

There appears to be a growing tendency in some tribes in B.C. to preserve what they retain of old stuff, and pass it on to their children. Also to educate their children in old tribal traditions and lore. There is also a revival (probably a reaction from the too rapid adoption of the White man's methods) of old dances, certain games, music & songs & costumes taking place in certain tribes of both Coast & Interior & this movement seems to be spreading.⁶³

Consequently, although Teit was concerned about the potential loss of Indigenous culture, efforts by Indigenous peoples to buck this narrative trajectory hindered his anthropological work.

Teit's active promotion of Indigenous land rights added to the tensions in his anthropological views. In this respect, he too sought to alter the potential declensionist narrative. Similar to how the various Indigenous peoples endeavoured to retain their "old stuff" in an effort shape the narrative towards resiliency in the face of acculturative forces, Teit also wished to see the continuation of Indigenous forms of land tenure in the face of spreading Eurocentric approaches to land use throughout British Columbia. While much of the historiography discussing Teit's involvement in lobbying for Indigenous rights has focused on his activities in the southern part of British Columbia, he also worked to ensure that the rights of Indigenous peoples in the northern part of the province were not trammelled upon.

The Provincial Game Warden correspondence contain various references to complaints related to Teit's supposed instigation of unrest among the Indigenous peoples in the North. For example, in the summer of 1911, a report had reached A. Bryan Williams, as well as the province's Attorney General W.J. Bowser, alleging that Teit was sewing the seeds of discontent among the region's Indigenous population:

⁶³ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir's Correspondence, I-A-236M, B635, f12, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 4 December 1912, Spences Bridge, BC, pp. 2-3.

I find now, however, that conditions are entirely changed. It appears that a man named Tait [sic], of Spence's Bridge, I understand whilst up there last Fall with a hunting party, made it his business to render them as discontented as possible. I cannot say that he said this or that, but he held a meeting of the Indians and told them not to tell the Indian Agent or Calbraith, the principal employer of Indians, thus rendering himself liable to a criminal charge under the Indian Act. The Indian Agent was urged to take action but decided that the matter was of no great importance. Since that meeting, however, the Indians have been very much stirred up, being under the impression that they are all going to be placed on a reserve and not allowed to leave it, and that some white rich man will buy up level mountain, and another the land round the head of the Klagan (their best hunting and trapping grounds) and that a railroad will be built through the country and a belt of land extending twenty miles on either side of it will be given by the Government to the railroad Company and they will no longer be allowed to hunt. They are a hunting tribe and say they don't want land or favours of to have to go on a reserve but want to be assured that their hunting grounds will be taken from them. They have collected a matter of \$800.00 which they intend to send down, presumable to Tait [sic], to secure justice for them. All our efforts to convince them that Tait [sic] is fooling them and has no standing have been useless, because, knowing, as they do, that Tait [sic] is sent up here by or through Bryan Williams, the Chief Game Warden, they are convinced that he is a Government official, and are looking forward to his return this year.⁶⁴

According to this report, Teit had provided the northern Indigenous people with a narrative of impending human-induced ecological changes which would have profound effects on their hunting and trapping economy. While Williams was dismissive of these allegations against Teit,⁶⁵ similar concerns would later arise.

In 1913, Indian Agent W. Scot Simpson wrote to Williams, reciting similar accusations to those that had been sent to Bowser:

I may say that I have had quite a hard fight with these Indians over this question as they have been in constant touch with Tait [sic] who is acting as secretary of the Indian rights association, and [sic] I have been informed by one of these Indians that he is the man who urged them to make this demand while pretending that he had nothing further to do with the matter than to listen to their deliberations as a guest to their meetings, I [sic] am fully convinced that this Man is telling the truth as I have undisputed evidence that he sent a letter signed by himself as Secretary of the

⁶⁴ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0446, Box 30, File 1, fragment of letter sent to W.J. Bowser, n.d.

⁶⁵ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0446, Box 30, File 1, A. Bryan Williams letter to W.J. Bowser, Vancouver, BC, 31 August 1911.

Indian rights association, stating that a meeting had been held at which there were 100 delegates present, and that they had discussed the report of the special commission which dealt with the Indian Reserves, [sic] He said that the commissioner had reported that certain Indians held Reserves that were too large while others did not have sufficient lands and they suggested that these lands be divided among the different Bands, [sic] He goes on to state that the meeting were not interested [sic] in this matter ,but [sic] that the question of the unsundered lands in the Province was the point on which they were to hold our, [sic] He winds up by stating that Commissioners are to visit this locality during the coming Summer to settle the matter, and he warns them to accept no terms from them without they are acceptable to the Indian rights association,he [sic] signing name as Secretary, [sic] So he thus makes himself arbitator [sic] of the whole question,and [sic] is posing as an employee of the Government,A [sic] Dangerous character, [sic]⁶⁶

Simpson's letter is interesting in two respects. First, the Indian Agent repeats the previous allegation that Teit was posing as a government agent. Secondly, and more importantly, Simpson reveals his patronizing view on Indigenous peoples by suggesting that Teit did more than act as secretary.⁶⁷

In spite of these nuances in the narrative trajectory imposed upon Indigenous peoples, Teit – influenced by the salvage anthropology paradigm – was focused on determining the band affiliations and traditional territories as they existed prior to European influence. In his instructions to Teit for delineating band affiliations of the Athapaskan groups in the North, Edward Sapir suggested, “my primary idea was to base this classification on linguistic evidence as deduced from fairly extensive vocabularies and test grammatical questions, and on information obtained by direct enquiry as to the exact tribal boundaries of the various Indians you might come in contact with or hear about.”⁶⁸ For his work in the subarctic, Teit used a modified version of the test ethnological

⁶⁶ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden, GR-0446, Box 44, File 2, W. Scott Simpson letter to A. Bryan Williams, Telegraph Creek, BC, 20 April 1913.

⁶⁷ According to Wendy Wickwire, “‘We Shall Drink from the Stream and So Shall You’,” “From 1908 until his death in 1922, he was at the centre of a Native political movement, acting as translator, scribe, and lobbyist” (200).

⁶⁸ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir's Correspondence, I-A-236M, B635, f12, Edward Sapir letter to James A. Teit, 21 December 1912, Ontario, 1-2.

questions that he had used for his work with the Salish. This test included determining the distribution of various tribes, languages, and dialects, as well as understanding the distribution of various components of Salish material culture.⁶⁹ Of course, certain modifications to this initial questionnaire were necessary when applied to the Athapaskan groups of northern BC.⁷⁰ Some perspective on how linguistics shaped Teit's view of original traditional territories and how it fit into a narrative considering the diaspora of Indigenous groups is provided in the anthropologist's response to a paper written by Sapir about "Time Perspective in Aboriginal American Culture." After having read the paper, Teit wrote Sapir stating:

Your paper brought to my mind a point I had thought about several times for the Salish and it might be applicable to some other stocks as well. I thought an idea of the original home of the Salish might be obtained (or even might be proved) by a study of all the words in the various Salish languages or dialects relating to environment such for instances as the names of all animals, birds, reptiles, fish, insects, trees, bushes, plants[,] barks of trees, berries &c. Thus the word *kāma* for the [dry?] or dead needles of the yellow pine is used by every Interior Salish tribe. Some of the tribes have spread beyond the limits of the tree but the name is retained. As the yellow pine ... belongs entirely to the dry valleys of the Interior parts of B.C. Washington, Idaho & Montana ... it would seem the home of the Interior Salish before the language split into dialects was somewhere in the region within the range of this tree.⁷¹

While this statement does not directly pertain to the Kaska, it nevertheless is illustrative of Teit's views regarding traditional territories. Moreover, it is worth noting that Sapir's article came to Teit's attention as he was in the process of developing a manuscript about Kaska and the Tahltan culture.

⁶⁹ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir's Correspondence, I-A-236M, B635, f12, James A. Teit, "Test Ethnological Questions used among Salish tribes of U.S.A. &c."

⁷⁰ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir's Correspondence, I-A-236M, B635, f13, Edward Sapir letter to James A. Teit, 16 January 1913.

⁷¹ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir's Correspondence, I-A-236M, B635, f15, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 7 December 1916, Spences Bridge, BC.

One factor that Teit had to deal with when doing ethnography in the subarctic were seasonal movements. Seasonality posed a challenge both to the practical pursuit of gathering information, as well as the process of determining traditional territories. Both the Reserve Commission and James Teit failed to meet with the Liard Band due to the challenges of coordinating their own information-gathering pursuits with the movements of the northern Athapaskans.⁷² An additional challenge relating to mobility was determining how Athapaskan groups, who had more recently migrated into the Stikine region from other regions, affected anthropologists' information gathering endeavours. The mobile lifestyle of northern Athapaskans posed a greater challenge to Teit than it did to the members of the Reserve Commission, who were less concerned with past land use. For example, while conducting fieldwork among the Kaska, Teit noted that a group of Athapaskans from elsewhere had moved into the vicinity of Dease River. He added:

I hear some Indians of a certain tribe are wanted by the NW police & this tribe or band has in consequence moved NW & N & other tribes have come into the territory of the first (at least temporarily)[.] Anyway there has been a general movement of bands NW and temporary displacement of some or all of the Liard region &c. somewhat similar to the movements of tribes after the Custer defeat on the [Plains?] but on a much smaller scale. I met a number of the [Bear?] Lake Inds but had no opportunity of doing work with them and besides I was not very anxious to deal with them as they were all young men not particularly well posted and being intruders and [lurking?] in the Kaska country[.] They had adopted more or less of the Kaska ways and even speech. I did not think it advisable to take down the vocabulary from them even as I could not be sure what I was getting.⁷³

The 'Bear Lake Indians' were largely absent from Teit's final manuscript. Providing a brief note about the Sekani – of whom the 'Bear Lake Indians' were a subgroup – the anthropologist wrote:

⁷² LAC, RG10, vol. 1025, f. AH11, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, Meeting with the Casca Tribe or Band of Indians at Telegraph Creek on Monday, 7 June 1915. In response to the question as to whether there were any "Indians from the Liard Band" present at Telegraph Creek, W. Scott Simpson stated: "No Sir, I went down there but could not see one. The Liard Indians are Nomads who are scattered all over" (11).

⁷³ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir's Correspondence, I-A-236M, B635, f14, James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, 7 September 1915, Telegraph Creek, BC, p. 2.

“South of the Liard along the Nelson River, etc., Sekani separates the Nahani from the Slave.”⁷⁴ Thus, while Teit’s correspondence with Sapir suggested greater complexity concerning historical processes, band affiliations, and land use and occupancy, he endeavoured in his final analysis to understand land use and occupancy as he believed it had once existed. Commenting further in his ethnography on the relationship between what he referred to as the Nahani (which included the Kaska and Tahltan) and other northern Athapaskan groups, such as the Sekani, Teit discussed the close relationship between the groups. Following his analysis of the connection between kinship ties and linguistic relationships linking the groups together, Teit wrote: “It seems the languages of the Nahani groups and the Sekani and Slave groups are on the whole rather closely related, although sufficiently distinct for separate grouping. Perhaps partly owing to this reason, the Indians have hardly any sense of the groupings.”⁷⁵ While glossing over more contemporary developments in the blurring of ethnographic divisions, Teit conceived of a pre-contact Athapaskan cultural milieu in which cultural affiliations were not rigidly defined internally. These complexities of cultural affiliations were, however, largely obscured by Teit’s efforts to define band and tribal affiliations and traditional territories.

Ambiguities around cultural identities were further concealed in Teit’s ethnography by notions of cultural purity. The anthropologist stated that Albert Dease – his main informant for the Kaska – was a “pure Kaska.”⁷⁶ This focus on cultural purity, however, is not to suggest that Teit completely ignored the complexities of band affiliations and traditional territories in his final work. For example, he highlighted various sources of confusion in northern Athapaskan ethnology, including the Tahltan’s and Kaska’s seasonal mobility and the existence of overlapping territories.

⁷⁴ Teit, “Field Notes on the Tahltan and Kaska Indians,” 47.

⁷⁵ Teit, “Field Notes,” 43.

⁷⁶ Teit, “Field Notes,” 41.

Nevertheless, when it came to the actual delineation of band affiliations and traditional territories, these complexities were ignored in favour of more rigid definitions.⁷⁷ Rather, by outlining sources of ethnographic confusion, Teit offered a warning to view his categories with a grain of salt. However, history and historical processes are largely absent from developing a more nuanced understanding of subarctic ethnogenesis and associated land use patterns.

As Teit sought to delineate Athapaskan ‘traditional boundaries’ he distilled land use to well-defined territories. With respect to Kaska territory, Teit defined their land use in relation to their western Tahltan neighbours. Describing the latter’s eastern boundary which abutted Kaska territory, he wrote:

crossing Dease River about the mouth of the Cottonwood and continuing across the source of the Muddy River almost to longitude 271 W., probably the most eastern point of their territory. From here their line followed the center of the Cassiar Mountains south and south westernly [sic] between the sources of the Stikine and Finlay to the head waters of the Skeena, which they seem to have crossed somewhere to the east of Ground Hog Mountain.⁷⁸

Further elaborating on this eastern boundary as it related to Kaska land use, Teit noted:

It seems there may have been some overlapping of territory along Dease River, as some Tahltan claim they had right of way or control of the country down as far as McDames Creek, where they sometimes went to trade, whilst the Kaska claim they hunted the country up as far as Dease Lake. It seems the Tahltan did very little hunting below Canyon River or certainly little or none below Cottonwood River and Eagle Rivers.⁷⁹

Teit was also aware of numerous factors that contributed to confusion regarding the traditional boundaries of the Athapaskans. Among these factors were the historical vicissitudes of trade networks which in turn shaped the boundaries between Indigenous groups. Commenting on the

⁷⁷ Teit, “Field Notes,” 41-46. However, it should be noted that overlapping territories are noted between the Tahltan and Kaska along the Dease River. Teit also mentioned the fact that various Tahltan individual had knowledge of different areas. In discussing the challenges of obtaining an understanding of traditional territories, Teit mentioned that boundaries had changed due to trade and changing headquarters. Finally, he observed that nomadic nature of bands as well as intermarriage further confused things, resulting in rights to use the lands of two tribes (51-52).

⁷⁸ Teit, “Field Notes,” 52.

⁷⁹ Teit, “Field Notes,” 52.

effects of trade among the Athapaskans, Teit wrote: “There may have been some changing or extension of boundaries within the last 100 years in certain places going to trade and some changing headquarters.”⁸⁰ In spite of these changing boundaries, Teit – like other salvage anthropologists – endeavoured to understand these ethnic borders and overlapping territories as they had existed prior to European contact, rendering a simplified and ahistorical understanding of traditional territories. Moreover, by using the advent of contact with Europeans (either through direct or indirect contact) as the scene-setting device for changes in Kaska and Tahltan boundaries, Teit obscured the possibilities of pre-contact fluctuations of these boundaries. These boundaries were more rigidly defined in maps that Teit produced to visually articulate Tahltan and Kaska traditional territories. Teit’s narrative trajectory lamenting the perceived passing of Indigenous culture resulted in a simplified version of Kaska land use.

⁸⁰ Teit, “Field Notes,” 52.

CANADA
 DEPARTMENT OF MINES AND RESOURCES
 MINES AND GEOLOGY BRANCH
 BUREAU OF GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

MAP 922A
 PHYSIOGRAPHIC
 SUBDIVISIONS
 OF THE
CANADIAN CORDILLERA
 NORTH OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH PARALLEL

Scale, 1:250,000 or 1 inch to 40 Miles
 0 40 80 120 Miles

193

Conclusion

The ways in which observers, such as Teit and the members of the McKenna-McBride Reserve Commission viewed the past and future developments of the Cassiar region influenced their perceptions of contemporary relationships between Indigenous peoples and the land. While there was a general consensus that Kaska “traditional” culture was fading into the past, Teit and the members of the Reserve Commission had conflicting views regarding this development. Teit lamented the passing of Indigenous culture and sought to collect information pertaining to past Indigenous land use. Meanwhile, the members of the Reserve Commission viewed contemporary land use with a mind towards the future assimilation of Indigenous land use patterns towards Eurocentric ones. Consequently, when evaluating the Kaska and their environment, they considered the agricultural and ranching potential of the region. Progressive and declensionist narratives relating to broader processes of acculturation shaped these understandings. With modifications, the narratives employed by Teit and the members of the McKenna-McBride Commission have been adopted by the Kaska as a means of asserting their land claims.

Narratives advanced by both Teit and the members of the Reserve Commission during the early twentieth century about the decline of Indigenous-oriented land use (albeit towards different ends) found new meanings in the late twentieth century. These narratives in turn shaped how individuals in the late twentieth century understood past land use and the dispossession of Indigenous lands. As members of the McKenna-McBride Reserve Commission conceived of a changing North that would not conform to pre-existing patterns of Indigenous land use – and hoped in turn that their own knowledge-gathering endeavours would serve as a catalyst for this transition – they saw little need to understand past Indigenous land use. Rather they focused on how future land use could take shape through the development of reserves. As a consequence, knowledge

produced by the members of the Reserve Commission proved to be of little value in subsequent debates around Kaska Aboriginal rights and title.

Similarly, James Teit, as a salvage anthropologist as well as advocate for Indigenous land rights, conceived of a changing North. However, rather than viewing these developments as progress, Teit lamented the potential passing of Indigenous culture and land use. Moreover, he believed that through his own advocacy work he could alter the potential alienation of Indigenous lands and reorientation of land use in northern British Columbia that the McKenna-McBride Reserve Commission represented. These views shaped his own ethnographic fieldwork as he endeavoured to understand land use as it had existed prior to European contact. However, as a salvage ethnographer, Teit, focused primarily on pre-contact land use and occupancy, concealed historical processes and provided simplified renderings of both Kaska and Tahltan land use. While providing greater insights into subsequent discussions concerning Aboriginal rights and title, Teit's anthropological work also circumscribed these debates. However, between these early twentieth century renderings of Kaska land use in northern British Columbia and the debates around land use and occupancy that gained momentum following the emergence of land claim negotiations in the 1970s, there was another state-imposed initiative that further defined Kaska land use and occupancy in the eyes of the state: trapline registration. The effects of this conservationist initiative on understandings of Kaska land use and occupancy will be the focus of chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE: “Many Families of Unseen Indians”: Trapline Registration and Understandings of Kaska Land Use in the BC-Yukon Borderlands

In 1925 the British Columbian government passed an order-in-council requiring all trappers to register their traplines.¹ In the Yukon, on the other hand, the territorial administration chose to conserve its furbearer population through closed seasons until 1950, when it began to develop its own trapline registration system.² The Yukon administration was fearful that the territory’s Indigenous trappers were losing access to furbearers as a result of Euro-Canadian encroachment.³ Although established under different contexts, trapline registration in these two jurisdictions represented the imposition of colonial conceptions of ‘appropriate’ land use upon Indigenous peoples. While trapline registration protected certain tracts of land for use by Indigenous trappers, it also opened other tracts of land to non-Indigenous peoples, creating a patchwork of trapping territory and disrupting pre-existing mobile hunting and trapping practices. Moreover, registered traplines disrupted the extant Indigenous system of allocating wildlife harvesting rights due to kinship ties. Consequently, trapline registration was part of a process of ‘rationalizing’ Indigenous land use within a Eurocentric approach while simultaneously alienating certain tracts of land to non-Indigenous trappers

Systems of trapline registration in northwestern Canada also influenced trapping activities beyond their respective jurisdictions. Trapline registration in northern BC affected Indigenous trappers who had harvested furs in the previously marginally-regulated borderland with the Yukon. With the implementation of trapline registration in the Yukon, trappers along this same borderland

¹ Brenda Ireland, “‘Working a Great Hardship on Us’: First Nations People, the State, and Fur-bearer Conservation in British Columbia Prior to 1930,” *Native Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (1996): 76-77. A trapline is a geographically-bound territory in which an individual or groups had exclusive trapping rights. The order-in-council produced the first compulsory trapline registration system in North America.

² Robert McCandless, “Trophies or Meat: Yukon Game Management, 1898-1976,” (Unpublished manuscript, 7 January 1977), 25-26.

³ Robert McCandless, *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History*, (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1985), 145.

experienced intensified regulation of trapping in the region. Trapline registration in the Yukon also affected trapping in the Northwest Territories (NWT)-Yukon borderland. Trappers living in the NWT while trapping in the Yukon – such as the Indigenous peoples of Fort Liard (in the historical literature referred to as the Fort Liard Slave, now referred to as the Acho Dene Koe) – were subject to the Yukon’s regulations.

The historiography focusing on trapline registration in British Columbia has typically revolved around the dispossession of Indigenous lands.⁴ To this historiographical note it might be added that the scope of each study has obscured the variations in which trapline registration was administered throughout northern BC and the Yukon and the concomitant impacts that administration had on Indigenous trapping activities. For example, in *Maps and Dreams*, anthropologist Hugh Brody primarily focused on the implementation and consequences of trapline registration in Treaty Eight territory in the northeastern corner of the province. Brody contended that trapline registration reflected the imposition of order on Indigenous land use in order to bring Indigenous peoples into a rational market economy. While highlighting this acculturative measure of trapline registration, he also noted that Euro-Canadian individuals sympathetic to Indigenous peoples viewed the system as a solution to the dispossession of Indigenous lands.⁵ Historian Brenda Ireland has taken a broader view of conservation in British Columbia. Her analysis focuses on the entire province and goes beyond traplines to consider the effects of conservation in general.⁶ Summing up the effects of trapline registration, Ireland stated: “Trapline registration restricted First Nations access to traditional territories, validated non-Aboriginal encroachment of

⁴ David Vogt, “‘Indians on White Lines’: Bureaucracy, Race, and Power on Northern British Columbian Traplines, 1925-1950,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, New Series, 26, no 1 (2015):165-166.

⁵ Hugh Brody, *Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier*, (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1981), 85-102.

⁶ Ireland, “‘Working a Great Hardship on Us’,” 65-90.

Aboriginal lands designated as Crown land, disrupted the First Nations' way of life and caused hardship."⁷

In response to the arguments advanced by scholars such as Brody and Ireland, historian David Vogt has indicated various problems with the singular focus on dispossession. He has suggested that this focus can obscure the daily practices of bureaucrats. Moreover, Indigenous peoples in northern British Columbia actually retained a large amount of trapping lands.⁸ Rather than concentrating on dispossession of Indigenous lands, Vogt has analysed the administrative division of traplines along racial lines which created "Indian lines" and "White lines."⁹ Historical geographer Jonathan Peyton has described the effects of trapline registration on the Tahltan in the Stikine watershed region. Peyton suggests that the implementation of trapline registration destabilized extant Tahltan social networks and usufructory rights. Moreover, he points out the paternalistic approach through which the BC government viewed and regulated Tahltan trapping activities.¹⁰

This chapter considers both the dispossession of Indigenous lands through trapline registration, as well as the ways in which the program served to prevent further encroachment by Euro-Canadian trappers. The greater focus of this study is the role that trapline registration played in shaping government knowledge of Indigenous land use and occupancy and the future implications of this knowledge-production. Moreover, by focusing on the Kaska – whose hunting and trapping territories are bifurcated by the BC-Yukon border – this study draws attention to the effects of trapline registration as it clashed with a different conservation regime to the north.¹¹

⁷ Ireland, "'Working a Great Hardship on Us'," 80.

⁸ Vogt, "'Indians on White Lines'," 166-167.

⁹ Vogt, "'Indians on White Lines'," 163-190.

¹⁰ Jonathan Peyton, "Imbricated Geographies of Conservation and Consumption in the Stikine Plateau," *Environment and History* 17, no. 4 (November 2011): 566-568.

¹¹ In "The Sinews of Their Lives: First Nations Access to Resources in the Yukon, 1890-1950," in *The Culture of Hunting in Canada*, eds., Jean L. Manore and Dale G. Minor, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 148-166, Kenneth

Since the implementation of regulations concerning the conservation of furbearers often had repercussions for individuals living beyond the boundaries of these respective jurisdictions, this chapter also examines the ways in which both the BC and Yukon governments influenced trapping activities of Indigenous residents in neighbouring jurisdictions. The BC-Yukon border is an arbitrary boundary following the sixtieth parallel North. Being an arbitrary boundary, it cuts across natural features such as valleys, waterways, and mountains that served as both travel corridors and obstacles for individuals who travelled and trapped in the Canadian subarctic. Meanwhile, the Yukon-NWT border is for the most part a ‘natural’ boundary. With some exceptions, it follows the height of land separating the Yukon and Mackenzie River watersheds. One exception occurs in the northern part of the border where it passes through the Peel River watershed. An additional example is the southern portion of the border. Here, the waters to the western side of the border are all part of the Mackenzie River watershed. While they are part of the same watershed, the Yukon-NWT border in this region nevertheless follows a natural boundary along the range of mountains separating the upper Liard River drainage from the remaining Mackenzie River basin. In spite of these differences, both boundaries cut across the cultural geographies of the Indigenous peoples who inhabit these borderlands. While previous studies have typically been confined within Euro-Canadian political boundaries, this chapter considers how these different types of boundaries influenced the extent to which trapline registration affected trappers in adjacent regions.¹² As conservation schemes were implemented in BC, the Yukon, and

Coates provides a brief discussion about cross-border Indigenous hunting and trapping activities. However, Coates’s analysis is largely based on archival materials focused primarily on the Yukon Territory to the detriment of more detailed cross-border analysis with BC.

¹² For example, Coates, “The Sinews of Their Lives,” and McCandless, *Yukon Wildlife*, focus primarily on the Yukon. Meanwhile, Ireland, ““Working a Great Hardship on Us”” and Brody, *Maps and Dreams*, focus on British Columbia.

the NWT, eventually culminating in trapline registration in each jurisdiction, government officials began to piece together a picture of Indigenous land use.

As trapline registration systems – and furbearer conservation initiatives in general – were implemented and enforced throughout northern British Columbia and southeastern Yukon, government agencies developed knowledge of and endeavoured to define Kaska land use. These efforts sought to define land use in new and much more thorough ways than had been achieved in previous state attempts. These processes involved interactions between different levels of government, including the federal government through the Department of Indian Affairs, the British Columbian government through the office of the Provincial Game Commissioner, and the Yukon government which was administered by the federal government's Department of the Interior. This chapter examines the complex and contradictory effects of trapline registration on Indigenous land rights. Specifically, it tracks the imposition of trapline registration on the Kaska and its effects as it simultaneously limited and protected their land use.

Towards Trapline Registration in British Columbia

Defining Kaska land use in the context of trapline registration involved rendering Kaska land use into a form that was easily legible to the state.¹³ Just as Peyton has argued that big game conservation rendered the Stikine region legible to government administrators, trapline registration performed a similar function.¹⁴ Kaska trapping activities were to be understood in a way that could

¹³ This process is reflective of the state simplifications described by James C. Scott in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). In "A Northern Indian Band's Mode of Production and its Articulation with the Multinational Mode," (MSc. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1984), Peter Petkov Dimitrov indicates that various land use categorizations – such as trapping – reflect a further distortion of Kaska land use. He wrote: "it must be stated that the analysis of land use activities into such categories as hunting, trapping and fishing is a Euro-Canadian distortion of the integrated nature of Ross River Indian land and resource use. When a Ross River Indian goes trapping this implies a whole range of activities such as camping, hunting, and fishing far beyond the setting of traps and snares" (65-66). In *Cis Dideen Kat (When the Plumes Rise): The Way of the Lake Babine Nation*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 115-116, Jo-Anne Fisk and Betty Patrick have discussed how trapline registration reshaped Babine hereditary trapline ownership.

¹⁴ Peyton, "Imbricated Geographies," 556.

be charted on a map and listed among other traplines based on longitudinal and latitudinal coordinates. The process of defining Kaska trapping activities in this way forced government agents to debate the nature of Kaska (and other Indigenous peoples') mobility patterns, as well as the nature of their fur harvesting patterns within the agents' own Eurocentric understandings of providential fur conservation practices. These debates served to elucidate – at least in the eyes of government agents – the range of Indigenous land use. Moreover, in British Columbia they simultaneously sought to circumscribe the extent of Indigenous trapping activities in order to make room for Euro-Canadian trappers. The process of trapline registration resulted in government officials endeavouring to define the extent of Kaska territory in relation to neighbouring Athapaskan groups, such as the Tahltan to the west and the Acho Dene Koe to the northeast. As names appeared on trapline maps associated with specific communities and bands, the boundaries between these groups took on more concrete forms than they had in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century ethnographic renderings of geologist George Mercer Dawson and anthropologist James A. Teit.¹⁵ In addition to ethnographers' efforts to delineate Kaska land use and occupancy, the Department of Indian Affairs made various early efforts to define their traditional territories. These portrayals of Kaska territories were generally roughly defined. For example, in his 1912 report to Indian Affairs, Stikine Indian Agent W. Scott Simpson described the territory of the Kaska resident on the Dease River as follows: "The headquarters of this band is at McDames Creek, but these Indians have no reserve. Their hunting grounds extend to all points within a radius of 80 miles from this centre."¹⁶ In a slightly more thorough effort to define the territory of the

¹⁵ George Mercer Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District, N.W.T. and Adjacent Northern Portion of British Columbia*, 1887; J.A. Teit, "Field Notes on the Tahltan and Kaska Indians: 1912-15," *Anthropologica* (1956): 40-170.

¹⁶ Canada, Indian Affairs, *Dominion of Canada Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1912*, (Ottawa, Ontario, 1912), 252.

Upper Liard Kaska, Simpson wrote: “This band, with headquarters at Liard, a trading post at the junction of the Dease river with the Liard, number 67, and their hunting grounds extend north into the Yukon territory for 180 miles or more, south to the junction of the Turnagain or Mud river with the Liard, and east to the Rocky mountains.”¹⁷ With the implementation of trapline registration, while the different levels and branches of government did not see eye-to-eye when it came to delineating Kaska trapping activities, they nevertheless all participated in a process that served to reduce Kaska land use to a simplified, relatively easy-to-map version.

Trapline registration was not the first attempt to impose colonial ideas of land use on the Kaska. From 1912-15 the McKenna-McBride Reserve Commission swept through British Columbia in order to establish reserves for the province’s Indigenous peoples in an attempt to settle the question of Indigenous title to land.¹⁸ Historian Brenda Ireland has suggested that the Reserve Commission served as a platform for the province’s Indigenous peoples to launch futile requests for the return of their land rights.¹⁹ However, for the Kaska, the process was largely dominated by Simpson and focused primarily on reorienting Kaska land use away from hunting and trapping (which the Department of Indian Affairs believed was a moribund industry) towards farming and ranching.²⁰ However, the myriad of records produced by trapline registration suggests two things. First, the predictions of a dying trapping industry during the 1910s was far from accurate. Secondly, trapline registration exerted a much greater influence on the lives of the Kaska and their other Athapaskan neighbours than the creation of reserves.

¹⁷ Canada, *Dominion of Canada Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1912*, 253.

¹⁸ Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*, (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2002), 228-229.

¹⁹ Ireland, ““Working a Great Hardship on Us’,” 73.

²⁰ British Columbia, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs., *Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia*, Vol. IV, (Victoria: Acme Press Limited, 1916), 745.

BC's compulsory trapline registration system emerged from the government's earlier efforts to conserve the province's furbearers. These efforts aimed to restrict trapping practices temporally rather than spatially. When animal populations were seen to be under threat, closed seasons were declared. As Ireland has noted, the BC government implemented their first closed season in 1896. During this closed season, which lasted from 1 April until 1 November, trappers were prohibited from harvesting beaver, marten, and land otter.²¹ Sometimes Indigenous peoples were exempt from closed seasons. Such a situation occurred in northern BC during two closed seasons on beaver, the first lasting from 1905 until 1907 and the second during the 1912-13 trapping season.²²

Prior to the implementation of trapline registration in British Columbia, the respective government agencies administering wildlife conservation in the North recognized that the borders were porous. They were also cognizant that regulations imposed on one jurisdiction could potentially affect their neighbours. For example, during the early 1920s, government agents from British Columbia, the Yukon, and Alaska exchanged a series of correspondence discussing the possibility of a co-ordinated closed season on marten to allow the animals population to rebound. During these discussions, concerns were expressed over the possibility of unscrupulous trappers taking the furs in one of the districts with a closed season and trading it in a region that did not have a closed season.²³ Curiously, while Alaska, the Yukon, and British Columbia (with some reservations) co-operated in the establishment of the closed season, Northwest Territories did not participate. When E.W. Nelson, the chief of the US Bureau of Biological Survey which oversaw

²¹ Ireland, "'Working a Great Hardship on Us'," 67.

²² Ireland, "'Working a Great Hardship on Us'," 72-73.

²³ Yukon Archives (YA), Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1890, File 12-5A, George P. Mackenzie letter to J.B. Harkin, Dawson, YT, 10 January 1924; Robert Lowe letter to George P. Mackenzie, Whitehorse, YT, 13 February 1924; E.W. Nelson letter to George P. Mackenzie, Washington, DC, 28 January 1924. This is just a small sample of the many correspondence regarding the coordinated close season on marten. See Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1890, Files 12-5A, 12-5B, and 12-5C.

the conservation of Alaska's land mammals and migratory birds,²⁴ contacted O.S. Finnie, the Director of the North West Territories and Yukon Branch, about the close season, Finnie expressed skepticism over the need for a closed season in the Northwest Territories. When expressing his views, he discussed the nature of marten ecology, stating that marten generally did not migrate between the Yukon and NWT.²⁵ Omitted from Finnie's assessment of the situation were the movements of trappers in the region, Indigenous or otherwise.

During these discussions around co-ordinated closed seasons, the British Columbia government was also discussing the implementation of trapline registration. As Ireland has discussed in her article "'Working a Great Hardship on Us'," while there had been considerations around creating exclusive trapping areas for Indigenous peoples in the northern part of the province, this plan never materialized.²⁶ As the provincial government implemented trapline registration throughout the province, various jurisdictional conflicts emerged between the Department of Indian Affairs and the British Columbian Fish and Wildlife Branch. The Stikine Indian Agency was the site of one of the most contentious battles between Indian Affairs and the Fish and Wildlife Branch. The seasonal movements of the Athapaskans in northern British Columbia proved to be a challenge when implementing trapline registration, resulting in some members of Indian Affairs questioning the appropriateness of traplines to Indigenous fur harvesting practices.²⁷

The Mechanics of Trapline Registration

²⁴ Ken Ross, *Pioneering Conservation in Alaska*, (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2006), 212.

²⁵ YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1890, File 12-5A, O.S. Finnie letter to E.W. Nelson, 15 March 1924. Also see Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1890, File 12-5C, O.S. Finnie letter to Percy Reid, Ottawa, Ontario, 3 March 1925.

²⁶ Ireland, "'Working a Great Hardship on Us'," 75-77.

²⁷ British Columbia Archives (BCA), British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 2, File 10, W.E. Ditchburn letter to A. Bryan Williams, Victoria, BC, 6 January 1932; LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Pt A, Harper Reed letter to C.C. Perry, Telegraph Creek, BC, 21 August 1932. These two correspondence provide insights into the debates, which are discussed in greater detail below.

Trapline registration provided a catalyst for the rationalization of land use in northern reaches of the province. This legislation resulted in efforts to delineate and register pre-existing traplines. For example, in Telegraph Creek during the winter of 1925-1926, provincial game wardens recorded individuals' information about existing traplines that applicants wished to register. Officials took applications from Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike. Applications contained various questions about the applicants and the tracts of land which they wished to register. Questions about the trappers included their nationality, how long they had resided in British Columbia, as well as how long they had trapped the grounds under consideration. With respect to nationality, Indigenous peoples were referred to as either "Half-breeds" or "Indians." In order to better ascertain the disposition of the land and its historical use and occupancy, the application forms asked trapline applicants to name the previous occupants of the trapline. The responses to this question were often vague, simply providing the terse answer: "Indians. Names unknown." In accordance with the conservationist imperative driving trapline registration, the applications queried trappers on the types of furbearers that could be found along their respective traplines. Additionally, trappers were asked about the animal populations that had lived along the lines when they had initially started trapping the area and the number of animals residing along the lines at the point in which they were applying for the traplines.²⁸ Finally, the trapline applications asked for geographical descriptions of the lines. These descriptions often followed natural boundaries. For example, a trapline applied for by a resident of Porter's Landing was described as: "Commencing at a point 4 miles north of Laketon, and on the east bank of Dease Lake, thence north to Beady Creek, thence up Beady Creek 5 miles, and return to dease [sic] River, thence north down Dease River to Canyon Creek, thence up Canyon Creek 8 miles, thence

²⁸ There are numerous examples of these applications in British Columbia Archives (BCA), British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 7, File 6.

returning to Dease River, thence north to south end of Mosquito or Elbow Lake.”²⁹ In addition to these descriptions, applications were accompanied by sketch maps (Figure 5-1). In this respect, the provincial government sought to render pre-existing land use into a form of land management that would be legible to the bureaucrats in Vancouver and Victoria.

The order-in-council requiring trappers to register their traplines with the provincial government was issued in August 1925. With few exceptions, no one could trap without having first “secured registration of a trap-line, and no person shall set or cause to be set any trap save within the limits of the registered trap-line of which he is the holder.”³⁰ The process of trapline registration also required individuals to obtain trapping licences. In doing so, trappers provided information about their nationality, how long they had resided in BC, and how long they had trapped on a particular tract of land. At the expiration of the trapping licence, trappers submitted a report indicating the number of furbearing animals taken from the line while the licence was in operation.³¹

Much of the on-the-ground implementation of trapline registration was carried out by the British Columbia Provincial Police force. On 2 September 1926, the Provincial Game Warden, J.H. McMullin, issued a General Order to the NCOs and Constables throughout the province laying out the process by which trapline registration would be implemented:

In due course you will be furnished with a book containing maps of your district or Division for use in connection with the regulations dealing with the registration of trap lines. These maps have been ruled and divided into small blocks. It is my wish that all NCO's or Constables in charge of detachments do everything possible to

²⁹ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 7, File 6, Application for Registration of a Trap-line, 1 March 1926, Telegraph Creek, BC.

³⁰ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 2, File 9, Registration of Trap-lines, Gazetted, 23 August 1925, 2550.

³¹ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 2, File 9, Registration of Trap-lines, Gazetted, 23 August 1925, 2550.

keep these maps up to date, in good condition and to see that any work thereon is done neatly.³²

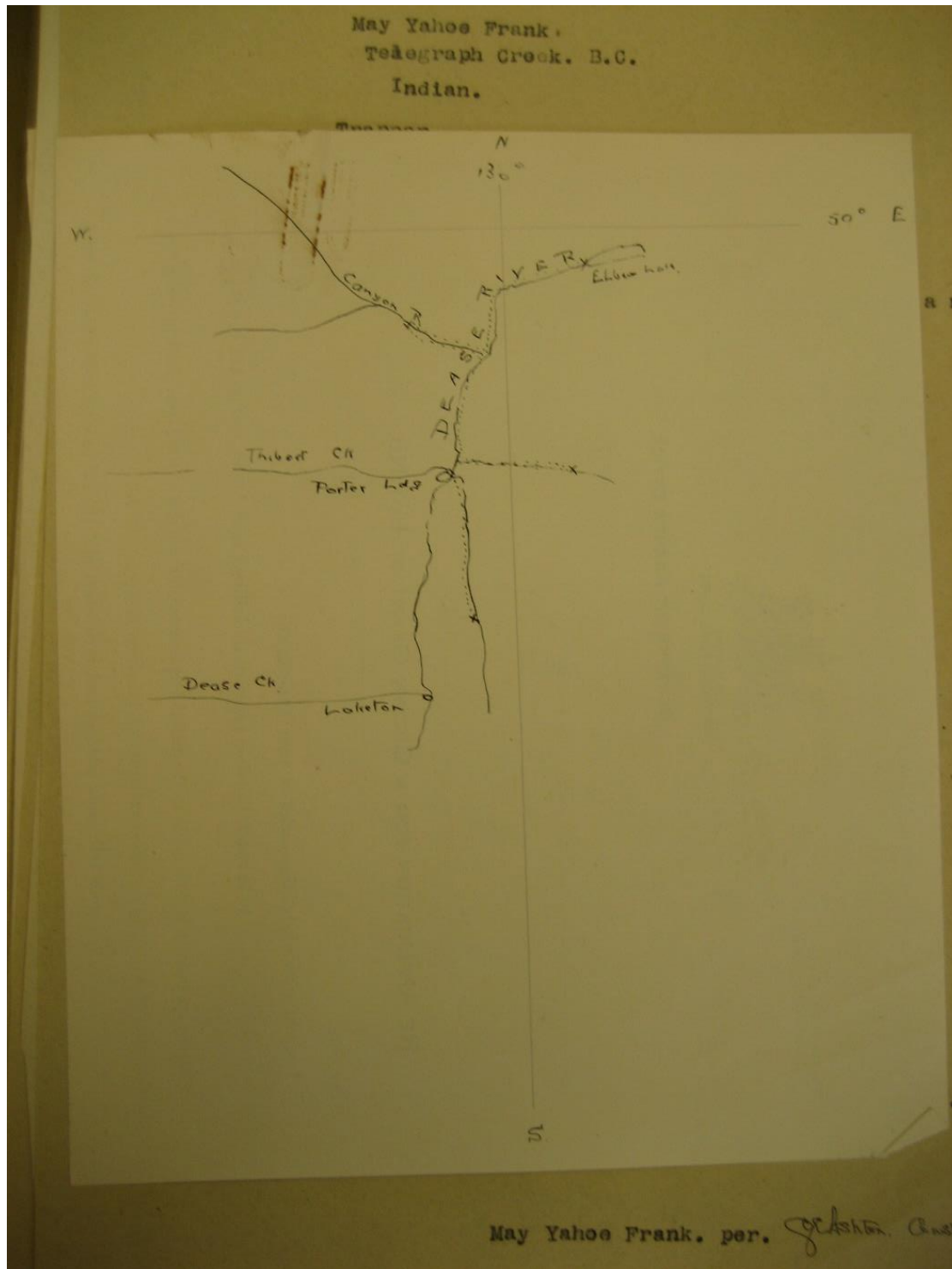
These sketch maps were to be sent to the headquarters in Victoria.³³ Indian Agents, responsible for registering Indigenous traplines, were sent applications and paper for sketch maps. Upon registering traplines for the Indigenous peoples of a specific Indian Agency, the application was to be sent to the Provincial Constable in charge of the district.³⁴

³² BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 2, File 9, J.H. Mullin, British Columbia Police General Order No. 43, Victoria, BC, 2 September 1926.

³³ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 2, File 9, J.H. Mullin, British Columbia Police General Order No. 43, Victoria, BC, 2 September 1926.

³⁴ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 2, File 9, J.H. Mullin, British Columbia Police General Order No. 43, Victoria, BC, 2 September 1926.

Figure 5-1: Sketch Map of Trapline³⁵



³⁵ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 7, File 6, Trapline Sketch Map, Telegraph Creek, BC.

The Implementation of Trapline Registration in Northern British Columbia

With the continued implementation of trapline registration in the Stikine, Cassiar, and Liard regions of northern BC and its expansion into the hunting and trapping territories of the Kaska, complications and conflicts emerged. One of the chief obstacles to trapline registration was the seasonal movements of the Kaska – and other northern Indigenous groups – as they participated in trapping and subsistence harvesting activities. During this period, two government agencies struggled with competing interests relating to trapline registration and Indigenous land use: British Columbia's Office of the Game Commissioner (assisted by the British Columbia Provincial Police force) and the federal government's Department of Indian Affairs. The two agencies debated the nature of Indigenous trapping practices and land use and systems of land tenure in general. For example, writing to A. Bryan Williams, BC's Game Commissioner, on 6 January 1932, the Indian Commissioner for BC, W.E. Ditchburn quoted from a 1926 report from the former Indian Agent of the Stikine Agency, W. Scott Simpson. Simpson had noted the large territory that Indigenous peoples trapped over:

Trappers are obliged to move from one section to another in order to secure a variety of pelts; for instance, a man may be trapping in one locality in November for Lynx or Coyotes and later on in another section for Foxes; then towards February they go into the Marten country, and towards the close of the season they may be trapping Beaver in a section one hundred miles away from their first trapping ground.³⁶

This statement raised questions about the appropriateness of a system of registered traplines in the Cassiar region and supported alternative suggestions from Indian Affairs. For example, Ditchburn

³⁶ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 2, File 10, Scott Simpson as quoted in W.E. Ditchburn letter to A. Bryan Williams, Victoria, BC, 6 January 1932.

noted that the adjacent Yukon Territory, rather than implementing a system of registered traplines, had declared a closed season on beaver.³⁷

Prior to Ditchburn's criticism of registering traplines in northern British Columbia, the Indian Agent for the Stikine Indian Agency, Harper Reed, had attempted to ascertain the requirements for registered traplines for the Kaska of McDames and Liard Districts. Noting that there were no trapping regulations in force during the summer of 1930, Reed stated: "[T]hese Indians travel in bunches and trap as they go[.] Under the new system 196. traplines will be required. However there are many families of unseen Indians in this Country, some not seen for 4 years, and these if they return will require at least 100 traplines."³⁸ In addition to attempting to understand the number of traplines that would be required for the Kaska, efforts were also undertaken to understand the locations of different bands in the Stikine Indian Agency. For example, Reed endeavoured to gain information on Indigenous land use from Indigenous peoples themselves. In 1931 Ditchburn noted, "Mr. Reed reports that it is expected that during the present summer the Teslin, McDames and Liard Indians will be consulted and their lines become established as well as in other parts of the Agency."³⁹ This statement highlights Reed's efforts to allocate trapping territories by band and, consequently, map out boundaries between them. Further evidence of the combined efforts to register Indigenous traplines and understand traditional band territories is provided by Figure 5-2. This map appears in a file that deals with the allocation of Indigenous traplines within the Stikine Indian Agency.

³⁷ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, Box 2, File 10, W.E. Ditchburn letter to A. Bryan Williams, Victoria, BC, 6 January 1932.

³⁸ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Pt A, Harper Reed letter to C.C. Perry, Telegraph Creek, BC, 21 August 1930.

³⁹ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Pt A, W.E. Ditchburn letter to Rev. E. Allard, 30 March 1931.

Delineating the Indigenous peoples of northern BC into bands connected with specific trapping territories was part of the process of rendering Indigenous land use legible to government bureaucrats. Anthropologists Paul Nadasdy and Brian Thom have described how the creation of *Indian Act* bands relate to the emergence of today's Indigenous political units and the territorial boundaries that emerged between them. According to Nadasdy, the bands that were created by the *Indian Act* had no relation to existing political units. Meanwhile, Thom has described how the Act enforced non-Indigenous concepts of boundaries and created formal band members. This membership and the associated boundaries was created with no regard for kinship ties.⁴⁰ Writing specifically about the Kaska, anthropologist Wilson Duff noted the difficulties of distinguishing bands: "In such an area where the bands are in a constant state of change in their composition and their locations, where bands are known by different names to different neighbours, and where 'Kaska' bands differ so little from surrounding bands, it is difficult to set down a clearcut account of the groups structure and territories."⁴¹ Similarly, as Reed endeavoured to link specific trapping territories with specific bands, he contributed to constructing a distilled understanding of Kaska land use which did not consider broader kinship ties and usufructory rights. This process, in turn, led to the development of boundaries between communities.

Sometimes the process of trapline registration and band creation advanced hand-in-hand. Thus trapline registration advanced the process towards what Nadasdy has referred to as 'ethno-territorial nationalisms.'⁴² For example, in 1940, Reed provided a detailed description of how he went about naming specific bands. The Indian Agent undertook this task in order to avoid

⁴⁰ Paul Nadasdy, "Boundaries among Kin: Sovereignty, the Modern Treaty Process, and the Rise of Ethno-Territorial Nationalism among Yukon First Nation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012): 508; Brian Thom, "The Paradox of Boundaries in Coast Salish Territories," *Cultural Geographies* 16 (2009): 187.

⁴¹ BCA, British Columbia, Provincial Museum, Wilson Duff Papers, GR-2809, file 80, "Kaska."

⁴² Nadasdy, "Boundaries among Kin," 528.

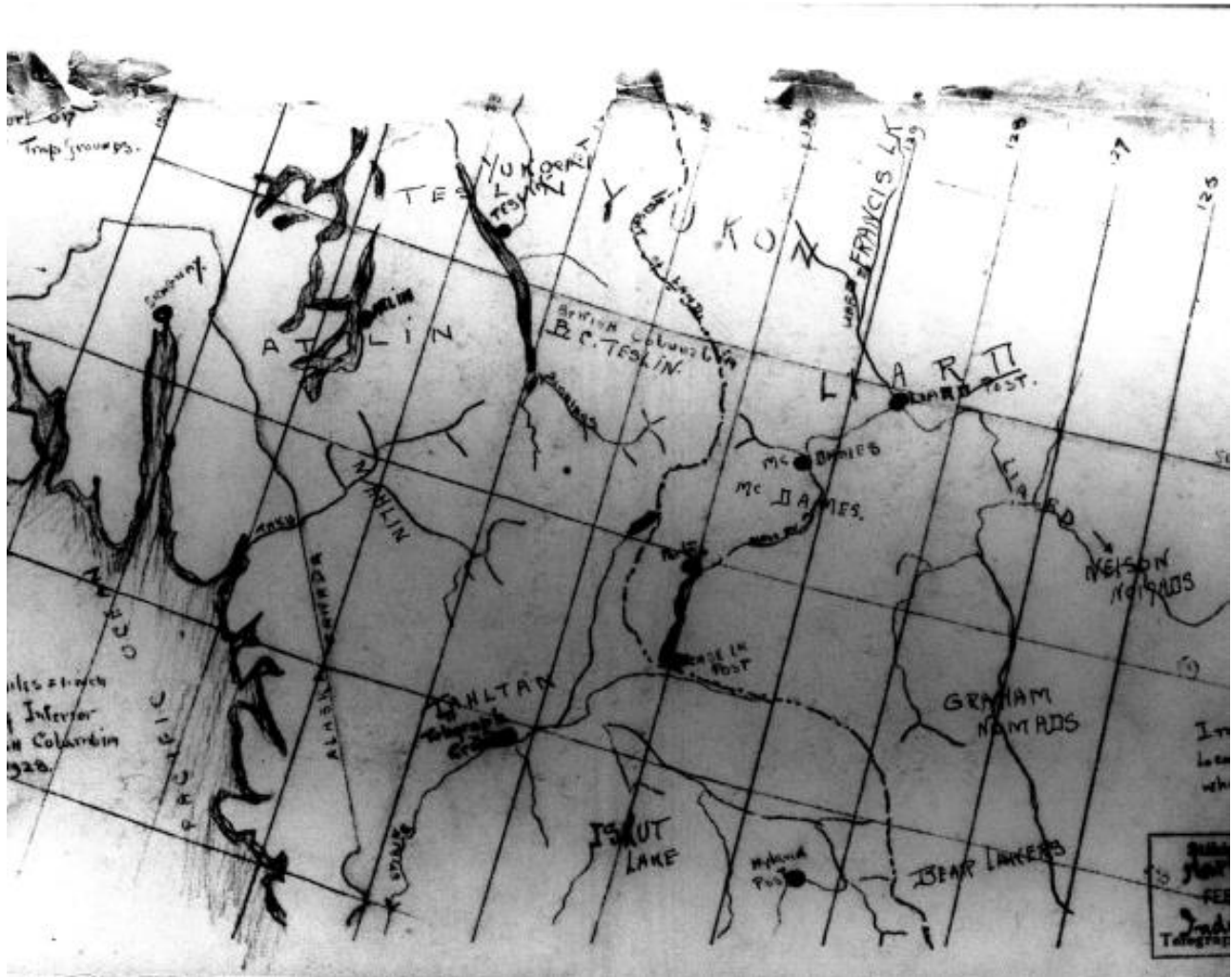
confusion among the game wardens, whose job, Reed noted, was “that of Registration, not Tribal arrangements.”⁴³ Reed proceeded to note that, “[t]he indians of the Interior are not in Bands, strictly speaking. They are composed of bands of indians who together trade to certain Trading Posts.”⁴⁴ Concluding his process of identifying ‘bands,’ Reed stated, “[t]herefore such small or large ‘sets’ of indians who ‘ran’ together, were named Bands.”⁴⁵ Consequently, the spatial affiliation of trapping territories emerged concurrently to band formation, as conceived of by Reed.

⁴³ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Trapline Registration for Liard Post Band, Harper Reed letter to D.M. Mackay, Telegraph Creek, BC, 11 January 1940.

⁴⁴ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Trapline Registration for Liard Post Band, Harper Reed letter to D.M. Mackay, Telegraph Creek, BC, 11 January 1940.

⁴⁵ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Trapline Registration for Liard Post Band, Harper Reed letter to D.M. Mackay, Telegraph Creek, BC, 11 January 1940.

Figure 5-2: Map identifying names and locations of bands within the Stikine Indian Agency.⁴⁶



⁴⁶ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Pt A, map accompanying report of registered Indian trap grounds, produced by Harper Reed, 5 February 1931.

As Ditchburn's criticisms of the registered trapline system circulated through the Game Commissioner's office, reaching some of the game wardens stationed in the North, various departmental agents commented on Indigenous trapping activities. For example, Thomas Van Dyk, the District Game Warden for northern British Columbia, wrote to Game Commissioner Williams, providing what he viewed as a corrective to Simpson's description of trapping practices in the Cassiar region:

I beg to submit that the Indians are not moving from one section of the Country to another to secure a variety of pelts of fur-bearing animals, but their moving is brought about by the killing of moose, cariboo [sic] or bear, the whole tribe moving to the kill. Where they remain until the meat is consumed. In the meantime, extensive trapping is carried out over the surrounding Country. Upon the killing of another moose, cariboo [sic], etc., the Tribe again moves to the place of killing (at times many miles from the original kill). The method of hunting and trapping being resorted to during the whole Season, a great number of miles are covered and a great variety of pelts secured.⁴⁷

In case this point had not already been made clear, Van Dyk added that "trapping is only incidental to the killing and consuming of the meat."⁴⁸ In this respect, Van Dyk and Simpson were in agreement about the mobility of Indigenous peoples' wildlife harvesting practices in the Cassiar region; however, they disagreed on the nature of this mobility and the significance of trapping to their travels through the subarctic landscape. Van Dyk's assertion that trapping was incidental to hunting suggests that Indigenous peoples in the Cassiar region were not dependent on trapping. This statement implicitly served as a counterargument to the position of Indian Affairs that trapping was important to the livelihoods of Indigenous peoples in the Cassiar region.⁴⁹ Kaska oral histories indicate that hunting and fishing activities corresponded with trapping activities.

⁴⁷ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, Box 2, File 10, T. Van Dyk letter to the Game Commissioner, Prince George, BC, 17 March 1932.

⁴⁸ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, Box 2, File 10, T. Van Dyk letter to the Game Commissioner, Prince George, BC, 17 March 1932.

⁴⁹ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, Box 2, File 10, W.E. Ditchburn letter to A. Bryan Williams, Victoria, BC, 6 January 1932.

However, the oral histories do not indicate that trapping activities were subordinate to these other harvesting activities.⁵⁰

The correspondence between the Office of the Game Commissioner and Indian Affairs, as well as within the Office of the Game Commissioner, reflected government officials' efforts to position themselves as 'experts' on Indigenous land use. In spite of the divergent views of the government agents from these different departments and levels of government, they demonstrate the ways in which trapline registration circumscribed extant Indigenous wildlife harvesting practices by limiting their mobility range.

Even as Department of Indian Affairs officials and provincial game wardens debated the nature of Kaska hunting and trapping patterns in the Cassiar-Liard region in order to establish themselves as authorities on the matter, evidence points towards an inchoate understanding of the region by any level of government during the early 1930s. This fact was highlighted by Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Inspector T.V. Sandys Wunsch in September 1931 during his Liard patrol. Part of the problem stemmed from a lack of communication between game wardens and the Game Commissioner in Vancouver. The other part of the problem was a lack of geographical knowledge of the region in question. As Sandys Wunsch wrote:

When Sergt Brice and I visited the Game Office in Vancouver we were shown a map on which trap lines in the Liard District were marked, there were none on the Liard River. On arrival at Telegraph Creek a map in the possession of the Provincial Constable was found to show a few, this was the first difficulty.

All the trappers at Liard were in an uncertain state of mind as to whether their lines were registered or not. Some of them had been paying licences for several years

⁵⁰ Ross River Dena Council, *Dene Dechen Tah Néde' (Living in the Bush): Traditional Lifestyles of the Kaska and Mountain Slavey People of Ross River*, (a Resource Reader Produced for the Ross River Dena Council, 1992). Maudie Dick has stated: "Sometimes while the salmon were still spawning we quit fishing and went hunting in the mountains. Sometimes we would remain behind and the men would go hunting by themselves. My mother was catching salmon with my older sister Sadie Jules. We were setting snares for rabbits while they caught salmon. We used to go pick berries too. Many people came back in July" (5). Although this quote is in reference to ancestors to the present-day Ross River Dena Council, this statement likely reflects the wildlife harvesting patterns of the Kaska Dena in northern BC as well.

and applying each year for the same ground, but have received no definite information that their registration was effected. The situation was further complicated by the fact that some of these trap lines were half in B. C. and half in the Yukon.⁵¹

Wunsch's statement highlights the lack of administrative control that the provincial government exercised over Kaska hunting and trapping territories from the Provincial Constable's office in Telegraph Creek, to say nothing of the Office of the Game Commissioner in Vancouver. This lack of administrative control allowed Euro-Canadian trappers to flout conservation legislation in both British Columbia and the Yukon.⁵² With respect to Indigenous trapping activities in the Liard region, Wunsch stated:

With regard to the Indians, the situation is even more involved. I received a letter from Mr. Harper [sic] Reed the Indian Agent, claiming practically the whole country for the Natives. I understand he is seeing the Game Warden from Prince Rupert with a view to allotting trapping grounds to the Indians. His task is rendered more difficult by the fact that these people will not stay in a definite area, but wander all over the country, more especially in the Spring when they hunt Beaver. None of the local Indians wish to trap on the ground held by any of the four men mentioned above. Most of them trap in the Yukon. I am sure that Mr. Reed will be able to satisfactorily settle the question of where the McDame Indians shall trap, which is apparently his main problem.⁵³

The last line of the above passage particularly demonstrates the incomplete understanding of extant Indigenous land use during the early 1930s.

While the provincial and federal governments endeavoured to advance their concepts of Kaska land use, they did not hold a monopoly on the discourse around land use knowledge. The Roman Catholic missionary, Rev. E. Allard, also commented on Kaska land use, trapline registration, and the incursions of Euro-Canadian trappers into the Cassiar region. Allard had first

⁵¹ BCA, British Columbia Fish and Game Branch, GR-1085, Box 19, File 1, T.V. Sandys Wunsch, "Enforcement of B.C. Game Act," 12 September 1931, 1.

⁵² BCA, British Columbia Fish and Game Branch, GR-1085, Box 19, A. Bryan Williams letter to T. Van Dyk, Vancouver, BC, 20 August 1932.

⁵³ BCA, British Columbia Fish and Game Branch, GR-1085, Box 19, Sandys Wunsch, "Enforcement of B.C. Game Act," 2.

visited the Kaska in 1925.⁵⁴ Harper Reed, the Indian Agent of the Stikine Indian Agency (succeeding the late Simpson), found an ally in the missionary when it came to advocating on behalf of the Kaska and advancing their trapping rights. For example, in February 1931, Reed noted that Allard greatly assisted him in instructing the Kaska of McDames Creek to register their traplines. The goal was to ensure that the Kaska would “be on the map.”⁵⁵ Moreover, Ditchburn, in his letter to Williams, suggested that Rev. Allard supported Simpson’s views on Indigenous trapping patterns in northern British Columbia.⁵⁶

In 1939, Allard published an ethnography on both the Kaska of the Dease River region and the Kaska of the Liard region, referred to as the ‘Upper Liard Indians.’⁵⁷ While providing geographical coordinates for the Dease River Kaska’s traditional territory, Allard was less precise in describing the Upper Liard Kaska’s traditional territory. Allard’s knowledge about Kaska land use and occupancy was likely derived from his involvement in trapline discussions. Moreover, the less detailed information on the Upper Liard Kaska likely reflects the dearth of knowledge about the region.⁵⁸ This lack of knowledge is supported by Harper Reed’s 1930 statement that there were “many families of unseen Indians.”⁵⁹ This example, along with Figure 5-2, demonstrate the combined effort to not only define Kaska land use within the context of nomadism, but also

⁵⁴ E. Allard, “Notes on the Kaska and Upper Liard Indians,” in *Primitive Man* 2, no. 1 (1929): 25-26.

⁵⁵ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Pt A, Harper Reed letter to W.E. Ditchburn, Telegraph Creek, BC, 6 February 1931.

⁵⁶ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 2, File 10, W.E. Ditchburn letter to A. Bryan Williams, Victoria, BC, 6 January 1932.

⁵⁷ In “Notes on the Kaska and Upper Liard Indians,” Allard referred to the Kaska of the Dease River region as Kaska, but did not refer to the Kaska of the upper Liard River as Kaska. However, he did note similarities between the two groups (25). In this respect, Allard seems to have adopted a similar view to James Teit before him and that would later be reproduced by anthropologist John Honigmann that the Dease River Kaska were the ‘Kaska Proper.’ Canadian Museum of History Archives, Edward Sapir’s Correspondence, I-A-236M, James A. Teit (1915), B635, f14 James A. Teit letter to Edward Sapir, Telegraph Creek, BC, 7 September 1915; John Joseph Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: An Ethnographic Reconstruction*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 19.

⁵⁸ Allard, “Notes on the Kaska and Upper Liard Indians,” 24-26.

⁵⁹ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Pt A, Harper Reed letter to C.C. Perry, Telegraph Creek, BC, 21 August 1930.

delineate band territories. Moreover, the cooperation between Reed and Allard and the production of the latter's ethnography demonstrates the interplay between state and non-state actors in delineating Kaska land use.

During the discussions about Indigenous trapping practices and the merits of trapline registration, nomadism, the nature of non-Indigenous trapping practices, and conservation were recurrent themes. Not surprisingly, given the quasi-private property component of traplines, as well as the conservationist element of the program, criticisms of common property emerged. Critics of property held in common favoured privately held land as a sustainable way to manage resources.⁶⁰ This concept interacted with the broader theme of nomadism. Thus, conservation was seen to be contingent on the spatial organization of trapping activities. However, Indian Affairs officials – along with their Roman Catholic ally – and the provincial game wardens viewed the interaction between space and conservation in divergent ways, highlighting the transiency of Euro-Canadian trappers. Stereotypes around Indigenous harvesting practices and the improvident uses of wildlife also factored into these spatial discussions.⁶¹

Simpson had argued that the Indigenous peoples of the Stikine Indian Agency were conservationists. However, he suggested that this state of affairs would be disturbed if non-Indigenous trappers were allowed into the region. Simpson claimed, “if whites are allowed to

⁶⁰ See Daniel Rueck, “Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance in Kahnawá:ke Mohawk Territory, 1850-1900,” *Canadian Historical Review* 95, no. 3 (September 2014): 352-381. Individual trapline registration is reflective of the imposition of the liberal order framework in the Yukon-BC borderlands, described by Ian McKay in “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (December 2000): 617-645. As McKay argued: “A liberal order is one that encourages and seeks to extend across time and space a belief in the epistemological and ontological primacy of the category ‘individual’” (623). Consequently, the imposition of individually-registered traplines reflected a subarctic manifestation of the liberal order framework. It might also be argued that the trapline registration system was the product of a clash of Indigenous and Euro-Canadian trapping common, similar to the process described by Allan Greer in “Commons and Enclosure in the Colonization of North America,” *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 2 (April 2012): 365-385.

⁶¹ John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 238.

deplete the fish and game on Indian hunting grounds, the Indians themselves will naturally take all they can, while they can, and there is grave danger that such a situation may bring about intensive competition between whites and Indians, ending in the virtual extermination of valuable species.”⁶² From Simpson’s perspective, if any situation resembling the tragedy of the commons were to emerge, it would be precipitated by the incursion of non-Indigenous trappers into pre-existing land use systems. Countering this argument, the Prince Rupert Game Warden, E. Martin, suggested that it was Indigenous over-trapping in the Cassiar region which had resulted in a situation where the Kaska – and other northern Indigenous peoples – wished to claim land that had been registered to white trappers.⁶³

As government agents debated Indigenous trapping practices, they failed to consider the intricacies of Indigenous land tenure systems, such as kinship ties and associated hunting and trapping rights. Anthropologist John Honigmann noted in his ethnography of the Kaska that kinship groups often periodically joined together and dispersed from each other based on the successes (or lack thereof) of the hunt.⁶⁴ In 1913, the trader and trapper Poole Field described some of the intricacies of Indigenous wildlife harvesting rights in the contiguous region in the Yukon: “The country is owned by the women. Any man from a foreign tribe taking a wife is supposed to hunt in the country his wife belongs to.”⁶⁵ Elaborating on the allocation of trapping rights, Field wrote:

⁶² British Columbia Archives, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 2, File 10, “The Plight of the Hunting and Fishing Indians.”

⁶³ British Columbia Archives, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 2, File 10, E. Martin, “Report: Reference to Mr. W.E. Ditchburn’s Indian Commissioner’s letter to the Game Commissioner, dated January 6th, 1932. Game Commissioner’s letter dated January 27th, 1932 your note thereto February 5th, 1932,” 7 March 1932, Prince Rupert, BC.

⁶⁴ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 75.

⁶⁵ Poole Field as quoted in J.H. MacNeish, ed., “The Poole Field Letters (1913),” *Anthropologica* 4 (1957): 50. In another letter, Poole Field described a similar allocation of hunting rights. In the Yukon Archives (YA), Poole Field fonds, 82/164, MSS 12, Poole Field letter to Jack, South Nahanni, 27 June 1939, he wrote: “the children owned hunting rights from the mother.” Although he was describing hunting rights on the Mackenzie River side of the mountain

Each Indian has his beaver country where he can go at any time and get his dinner, as the beaver, if not disturbed, will stay for years in one place or close to that neighbourhood. He arrives at his beaver country to find someone has been before him and not only taken his dinner but also his money in the shape of the beaver skin, and if he catches the man that did it as a rule there is trouble of some kind. This is how a lot of the trouble between different tribes is started, also amongst the tribe itself.⁶⁶

As Thom has written, so-called boundaries dividing Indigenous territories need to be considered within “a complex field of social relations.”⁶⁷ Similarly, these social relations must be considered with respect to the ‘nomadism’ of Indigenous trappers.

In northern British Columbia, the provincial government’s Game Department and the federal government’s Department of Indian Affairs were embroiled in discussions in which the spatial components of Indigenous land use and nomadism were wrapped up in debates concerning the most appropriate means of fur conservation. At the same time, Euro-Canadian trappers and their trapping patterns also became the subject of controversy. Martin’s comments regarding Indigenous peoples’ desire to claim land registered to Euro-Canadian trappers strongly hints at the role of privately-held traplines as a means of conservation. In this respect, the spatial aspect of registered traplines – meaning the continued use and stewardship of a small(ish) tract of land – was seen to contribute to the conservation of furbearers. Writing about the Dease Lake and Atlin regions – which would have affected the Kaska, Tahltan, and Tlingit respectively – Indian Agent Harper Reed stated:

During the past year information has come to hand that several White Trappers are considering throwing up their present trapping grounds, and making application for new locations. Various reasons have been advanced, the favourite being ‘the [sic] Indians are kicking so let them [the White Trappers] have it’. Some have given no

range, Field’s observations combined with the anthropological literature point towards a broad pattern of matrilineally-derived hunting rights.

⁶⁶ Field as quoted in MacNeish, “The Poole Field Letters,” 54.

⁶⁷ Thom, “The Paradox of Boundaries in Cost Salish Territories,” 181.

reasons but have never the less been supplied with new ground which have displaced or overlapped Indian Grounds.⁶⁸

Reed added: “It is most apparent to the Office that the real reason why White trappers of the Cassiar require new ground, is due to the fact that their present holdings are not producing sufficient returns for them to stay on same: i.e. they have depleted fur resources.”⁶⁹ Rather than conceiving Euro-Canadian trappers as relatively sedentary trappers, confined to one trapline and managing the line in such a manner that ensured the maintenance of a healthy population of furbearers, Reed – and other Indian Affairs officials – highlighted their transiency. Moreover, in response to a suggestion from Game Warden Edmund Martin that once white lines were abandoned they could revert to Indigenous peoples, Ditchburn argued that Euro-Canadian trappers generally trapped out regions before moving on to new lines. While transferring these lines to Indigenous peoples was “better than no lines at all,” it would “not ensure to them the results that could be best attained by giving the Indians the lines in the first instance upon a careful and impartial investigation of prior moral, if not legal, rights.”⁷⁰ Finally, describing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous trappers in the Cassiar region, Harper Reed wrote to Ditchburn in 1930: “This country is unmapped and unregistered, and [sic] has all sorts of trappers within its boundaries, from Nomad Indians to the Alien White Trappers, who all go where they please, at any time.”⁷¹ In this respect, trapline registration simultaneously confined Kaska trapping to sharply defined areas and made space for Euro-Canadian trappers, while also serving to limit the extent to which Euro-Canadian trappers could further encroach on Indigenous trapping areas.

⁶⁸ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Pt A, Harper Reed letter to Game Warden, Telegraph Creek, BC, 24 January 1931.

⁶⁹ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Pt A, Harper Reed letter to Game Warden, Telegraph Creek, BC, 24 January 1931.

⁷⁰ BCA, British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch, GR-1085, Box 2, File 10, W.E. Ditchburn letter to A. Bryan Williams, Victoria, BC, 6 January 1932.

⁷¹ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, Pt A, Harper Reed letter to W.E. Ditchburn, Telegraph Creek, BC, 4 August 1930.

Trapping and the Yukon-BC Borderland

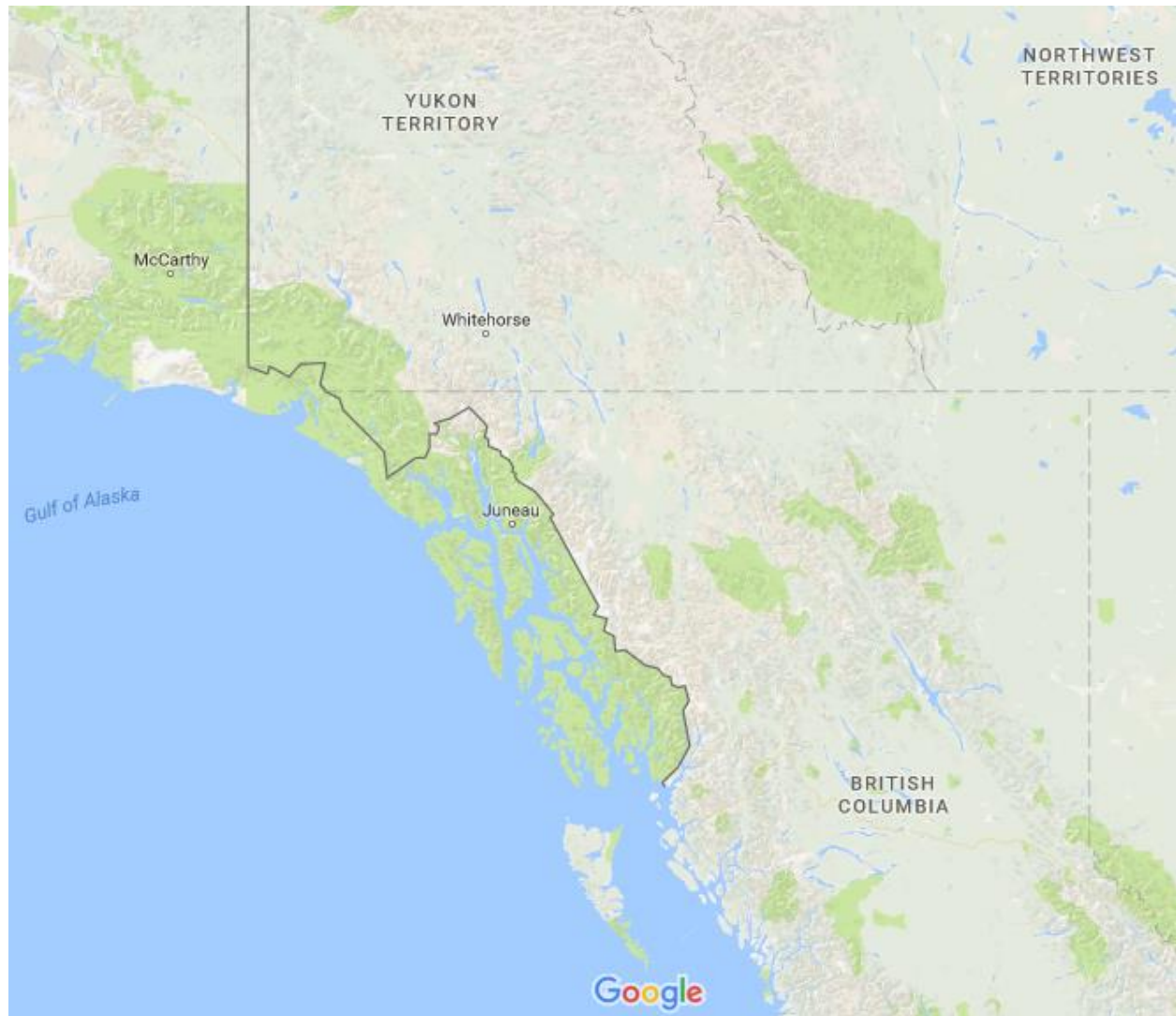
While game wardens and Indian Agents attempted to confine individual trapping activities to specific boundaries, the process of registering traplines and the efforts to define and delineate Kaska land use came up against the unnatural boundary between BC and the Yukon. The Yukon-BC border follows the sixtieth parallel north in a straight line, cutting across the region's natural features (Figure 5-3). While during the interwar years British Columbia had chosen a spatial approach to furbearer conservation, the Yukon had chosen to do so through temporal restrictions, perhaps most notably, a closed season on beaver.⁷² Nevertheless, spatial components of Kaska land use were still important as the Kaska's hunting and trapping territory was divided by the Yukon-BC border. This fact drew the Yukon's Indian Agent John Hawksley into discussions with Reed about cross-border trapping practices. Correspondence between the two Indian Agents suggests that there was some accommodation of Kaska seasonal movements. Hawksley wrote Reed in 1933 expressing his gratitude that Indigenous peoples in the Yukon were permitted to hunt and trap in the Stikine Indian Agency.⁷³ Hawksley commented, "Apparently there is no objection raised by the Indians of your Agency to the Yukon Indians hunting and trapping on the British Columbia side of the boundary, this [sic] is very gratifying."⁷⁴ Hawksley's observation highlights the fact that the arbitrary boundary cut across the cultural lines of the Kaska and other Indigenous groups.

⁷² Robert G. McCandless, *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 124-125.

⁷³ YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 1, Central Registry Files, GOV 1619, File 1490J, Folder 1, John Hawksley letter to Harper Reed, Dawson, YT, 25 February 1933.

⁷⁴ YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 1, Central Registry Files, GOV 1619, File 1490J, Folder 1, John Hawksley letter to Harper Reed, Dawson, YT, 25 February 1933.

Figure 5-3: Map of BC-Yukon Border (Google Maps)



Reed not only allowed the Yukon's Indigenous peoples to trap in BC, but also appears to have registered traplines to some of them. In the early 1940s, Indian Affairs and the Game Commissioner attempted to sort out conflicting claims over traplines between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the Stikine Indian Agency. These conflicts had resulted from the acrimonious relationship between Reed and the Provincial Game Wardens. As noted by James Coleman, the Inspector of Indian Agencies:

Relations between the Agent and the Provincial officials simply do not exist and I consider that the cause lies chiefly with the Agent himself. The result of this is that the Game officials in an attempt to carry on their administration have been compelled to deal direct with the Indians of late, which is not a satisfactory condition of affairs so far as we are concerned. I doubt very much whether we can expect any improvement in this direction.⁷⁵

During this effort to resolve these disputes it came to light that traplines had been registered to Indigenous people from the Yukon, who, according to Coleman, "are unable to meet the residential requirements of the B.C. 'Game Act'."⁷⁶ Coleman added: "Undoubtedly many of the Indians along the northerly end of the Agency trap both in British Columbia and the Yukon and I am not at all satisfied that one Indian community has any legal right to this activity in British Columbia."⁷⁷ Coleman also used the borderlands issue to cast doubt on the supposedly vast tracts of land that were needed by Indigenous trappers. Commenting on the estimated Indigenous population in the Stikine Indian Agency, Coleman wrote:

The Indian population of this Agency is not much over 700, which probably includes a number also on the Yukon Territory census, and that with even the most moderate attempt at conservation they should do very well with very much less ground than they now hold, but assuming that they will continue in occupation, they should find

⁷⁵ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 6736, file 420-302, part 2, James Coleman, "RE Indian Traplines, Stikine Indian Agency," 17 September 1940, 2.

⁷⁶ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 6736, file 420-302, part 2, James Coleman, "RE Indian Traplines, Stikine Indian Agency," 17 September 1940, 2.

⁷⁷ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 6736, file 420-302, part 2, James Coleman, "RE Indian Traplines, Stikine Indian Agency," 17 September 1940, 2.

it a comparatively easy matter to build up their breeding stocks of fur while continuing to draw a reasonable revenue from the lines.⁷⁸

Coleman articulated a watered-down version of the concept of *terra nullius*. This concept, as expressed in this particular context, was not based so much on the BC-Yukon borderlands being uninhabited; rather, it was based on the idea that it was sparsely inhabited by Indigenous peoples who could legitimately claim trapping rights in BC and, therefore, more land could be occupied by Euro-Canadian trappers.

The significance of the BC-Yukon boundary was further reinforced by D.M. MacKay, the Indian Commissioner for BC who had replaced Ditchburn. In 1941 MacKay wrote, “it is necessary that the Indians in that locality be definitely either members of a B.C. Agency or the Yukon, otherwise the boundary of our administration in that area would cease to exist.”⁷⁹ Significantly, MacKay also suggested that there were no bands in the Stikine River Indian Agency that could be referred to as nomads.⁸⁰ In this regard, the provincial-territorial boundary took on a more meaningful role in the lives of the Kaska and other Indigenous groups who had previously hunted and trapped on both sides of the border. The border issue was used to divide the Kaska into the Stikine Indian Agency and Yukon Indian Agency, respectively.

In addition to affecting Yukon Indigenous peoples’ trapping activities in northern British Columbia, trapline registration affected trapping in the Yukon. By the mid-1930s Harper Reed cast his gaze northward to the Yukon, seeking to establish a game preserve for Indigenous trappers. This game preserve was to be “bounded to the north by the Nahani River Mountains, on the west by the Nisutlin River, the east by the boundary of the Yukon and North West Territories and on

⁷⁸ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 6736, file 420-302, part 2, James Coleman, “RE Indian Traplines, Stikine Indian Agency,” 17 September 1940, 2.

⁷⁹ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, D.M. MacKay letter to the Secretary, 28 January 1941.

⁸⁰ LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, C-II-2, vol. 11291, D.M. MacKay letter to the Secretary, 28 January 1941.

the south by the Yukon and British Columbia boundary line.”⁸¹ His concerns regarding Indigenous trapping and fur conservation in the part of the Yukon contiguous to the Stikine Indian Agency were partially motivated by his desire to set aside land for exclusive use by Indigenous peoples as well as the perceived *laissez faire* approach to fur conservation in the territory. Advocating for the preserve, Reed stated:

[I]t is wished to state that new men, without proper authority are trapping over this good fur district. Last year one or two mining companies came into the Upper Liard River, went “broke” with the result that some of the men stayed on and trapped the winter through. Today another party is here in town awaiting transportation to Francis [sic] Lake District for prospecting purposes, and should they not meet with success, will go trapping. This would be quite correct if it were not for the fact that they use the excuse of prospecting for trapping purposes. The reason for so many such men in this part of the country, is due to the fact that they can get into the ... Yukon, through British Columbia, via Wrangell, Alaska, without correct supervision.⁸²

Implicit in Reed’s assessment of the situation in southeast Yukon was that in the absence of a geographically-bound and controlled trapping district (preferably for the exclusive use of Indigenous peoples) the furbearing population was threatened by illicit trapping activities.

In spite of Reed’s concerns, Charles Camsell (the Deputy Minister of the Department of Mines), George A. Jeckell (the Comptroller of the Yukon Territory), and G. Binning (the Indian Agent of the Yukon Territory) all agreed that this preserve was unnecessary. Both Camsell and Jeckell were reluctant to close off land that might prove valuable to Euro-Canadians. As Camsell wrote: “the preserves should not include country capable of being opened to the white by reason of its agricultural or mineral resources.”⁸³ This sentiment was reiterated by Jeckell, who cited the

⁸¹ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1895, File 12-15A, G. Binning letter to G.A. Jeckell, Dawson, YT, 18 October 1935.

⁸² Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1895, File 12-15A, Harper Reed letter to C.C. Perry, Telegraph Creek, BC, 12 July 1935.

⁸³ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1895, File 12-15A, Charles Camsell letter to R.A. Gibson, Ottawa, Ontario, 14 September 1935.

mineral potential in the region as justification for rejecting the game preserve. Moreover, Jeckell challenged the idea that over-trapping was occurring on the Yukon side of the border, stating: “I question the statement ... that the portion of the Yukon Territory bordering on British Columbia has been trapped out by the Indians and others, and that the Yukon Indians consequently have to trap in British Columbia. I am inclined to believe that the opposite is the case.”⁸⁴ Meanwhile, Binning suggested that the Indigenous trappers at Ross River, Teslin, and Frances Lake were doing well and in no need of a preserve.⁸⁵ Binning summed up his views on the proposed game preserve by highlighting the potential cross-border effects of its establishment:

I am of the opinion that the time has not yet come for the setting aside of this vast area as a Game Preserve, doubtless it would be of great benefit to the Indians if this was done, but I do not think that they have yet come to the place where large Game Preserves should be set aside for them wholly, and am afraid that if such was done in this case, we would be liable to have the Indians from northern British Columbia who may be unable to get trap line licenses there, flock to the Yukon, as well as many Indians from other parts of the Yukon moving into this district.⁸⁶

Binning feared that the apparent closing off of land in northern British Columbia, resulting from trapline registration, would prompt the province’s Indigenous peoples to move northward if more favourable conditions were created through the game preserve.

Concerns over the cross-border effects of the divergent approaches to furbearer conservation taken by British Columbia and the Yukon were also expressed by other individuals resident in the North. In 1940, Eisha Mayfield of Lower Post wrote to George Jeckell decrying the comparative lack of effort to conserve furbearers on the Yukon side of the border in contrast to British Columbia. Mayfield stated:

⁸⁴ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1895, File 12-15A, G.A. Jeckell letter to the Director, Lands, North West Territories and Yukon Branch, Dawson, YT, 18 October 1935.

⁸⁵ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1895, File 12-15A, G. Binning letter to G.A. Jeckell, Dawson, YT, 18 October 1935.

⁸⁶ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1895, File 12-15A, G. Binning letter to G.A. Jeckell, Dawson, YT, 18 October 1935.

A situation exists at Lower Post and apparently needs attention of your authorities. Liard (Lower) Post is situate[d] about 2 miles south of the Yukon Boundry [sic]. We on British Columbia side are trying to prevent lawlessness and conserve our game and natural resources.

Because of lack of cooperation [sic] on Yukon side, our efforts are much hampered. Liquor is brought in, Indians debauched and law flouted generally.

Aparently [sic] no trapping Regulations or game conservation is considered on Yukon side,

Would you kindly write me, let me know if your authorities will in some way help to correct this situation?⁸⁷

Jeckell, for his part, appears to have not viewed Mayfield's allegations as having much credibility.

Passing this report on to W. Grennan of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Jeckell stated, "This is the first report I have received of this nature respecting lawlessness in the Liard District of the Yukon."⁸⁸ Jeckell's sentiment was reiterated by Grennan.⁸⁹

While the closed seasons implemented by the Yukon government did not circumscribe Indigenous trapping spatially, in the way that traplines did, they nevertheless put pressure on Indigenous harvesting practices. This pressure was demonstrated in a series of correspondence that were sent from a member of the Liard Kaska community to John Honigmann, an anthropologist who had travelled north on the Alaska Highway shortly after its 1942 construction to conduct ethnographic fieldwork. In 1949, one of Honigmann's informants wrote him repeatedly complaining about the implementation of a closed season on beaver and the hardships it would bring to the members of the Liard community. Moreover, the informant asked that Honigmann

⁸⁷ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1897, File 12-19A, Elisha Mayfield letter to G.A. Jeckell, Liard (Lower) Post, BC, 15 August 1940.

⁸⁸ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1897, File 12-19A, G.A. Jeckell letter to W. Grennan, Dawson City, YT, 31 August 1940.

⁸⁹ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1897, File 12-19A, W. Grennan letter to G.A. Jeckell, Dawson, YT, 3 September 1940.

write to the government in Ottawa in an effort to bring an end to the closed season.⁹⁰ Honigmann acceded to this request, writing to the Indian Affairs Branch in Ottawa on 26 January 1949.⁹¹

Trapline Registration in the Yukon

As members of the Kaska community expressed their discontent with the close season on beaver, trapping conditions in the Yukon came to resemble those of their counterparts in BC in 1950 when the Yukon administration, then under the control of the federal government, implemented its own trapline registration program.⁹² The Yukon was among the last jurisdictions in Canada to do so, following the Northwest Territories, which had implemented trapline registration in 1949.⁹³ As trapline registration was implemented north of the BC-Yukon border, Kaska land use was further defined in the eyes of the state as it related to neighbouring groups such as the Acho Dene Koe resident in Fort Liard, Northwest Territories.⁹⁴ While the Yukon was hemmed in to the south and east by pre-existing trapline registration systems in BC and the NWT (even if the latter was nascent), its trapline system nevertheless affected the trapping activities of Indigenous peoples who typically resided outside the Yukon, such as the Acho Dene Koe.

⁹⁰ Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives, Papers of John Joseph Honigmann, Series 6, Box 50, Correspondence, Folder 1, [Informant] letter to John H. Honigmann, Liard Bridge, YT, 15 January 1949.

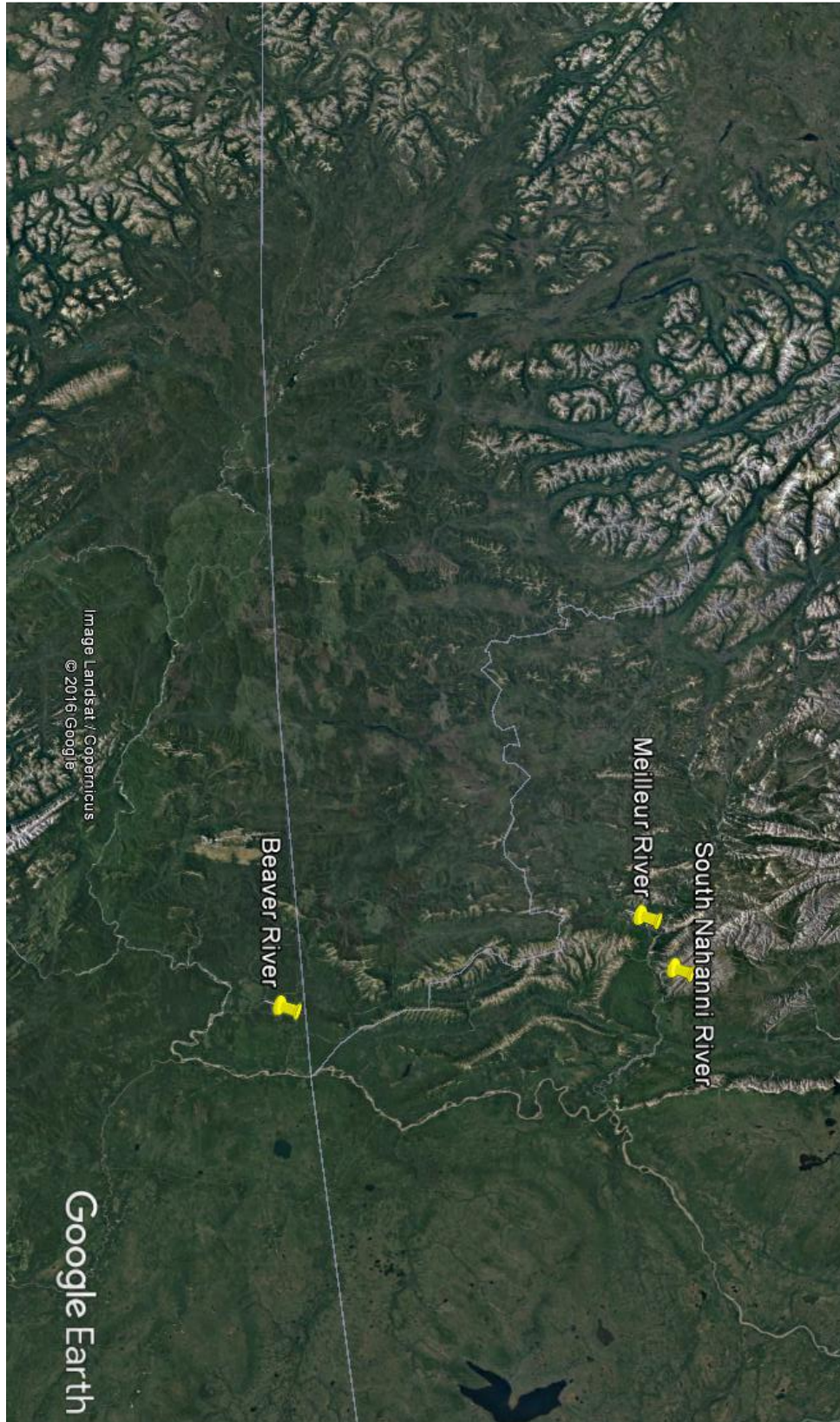
⁹¹ YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1898, File 12-23 Vol. I, John J. Honigmann letter to the Indian Affairs Branch, Long Island, NY, 26 January 1949.

⁹² For a description of the process towards a trapline registration system in the Yukon see McCandless, *Yukon Wildlife*, 142-148. Also see Ken S. Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973*, (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 168-169.

⁹³ Vogt, "'Indians on White Lines'," 180-181fn.

⁹⁴ YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 12, J.R. Gilholme letter to NCO in charge of Watson Lake Detachment, Fort Liard, NWT, 10 March 1966. This correspondence discusses two "Slavey Indians of the Fort Liard Band" trapping in the southeasternmost corner of the Yukon.

Figure 5-4: Map of Yukon-BC-NWT Borderlands



The border separating southeastern Yukon from southwestern Northwest Territories follows the mountains separating the Pelly River watershed (part of the larger Yukon River watershed) from the Mackenzie watershed (Figure 5-4). From there, it extends southward along the Mackenzie Mountains and the Kotaneelee Range which separates the upper Liard River watershed from the remainder of the Mackenzie River watershed. In this respect, the boundary was less arbitrary than the Yukon-British Columbian boundary. Nevertheless, similar to the Yukon-British Columbian boundary, the Yukon-Northwest Territories boundary also bifurcated the hunting and trapping territories of Indigenous groups, such as the Acho Dene Koe and other Athapaskan groups who typically resided on the eastern side of the mountains. Travel between these watersheds was noted by R.M. Patterson, who travelled through the Nahanni region during the late 1920s. In *The Dangerous River*, Patterson discussed travelling along the Meilleur River valley, which he later learned was an Indigenous trail from the Nahanni River watershed in the Northwest Territories to the Beaver River in the Yukon.⁹⁵ Shedding more light on Indigenous travel across the border, Patterson wrote:

They had come from the Beaver River in the Yukon by a pass to the head of the Meilleur. They had gone in from South Nahanni over the windswept plateaux of the Tlogotsho by dog team, with their families, to the Beaver after freeze-up, and they were making their winter hunt in there. This was the trip that they always made in to la Flair's post before break-up in the spring to trade some of their fur for the various things they had run out of: tea and sugar were amongst these so this inky brew that I had made for them was doubly a treat. They would be back this way in a few days, they said, on their way back in to the Beaver River for the spring beaver hunt; and when that was over and done with and the rivers had gone out they would make skin-boats out of moose hides whipped on the wooden frames, and in these they would run down the Beaver, families, dogs, toboggans and furs all piled in together, and down the Liard to South Nahanni.⁹⁶

Patterson clearly demonstrated the porousness of the border.

⁹⁵ R.M. Patterson, *The Dangerous River: Adventure on the Nahanni*, (Victoria: Touchwood Editions, 2009), 198. Originally published in 1954.

⁹⁶ Patterson, *The Dangerous River*, 268.

The use of the southeastern toe of the Yukon by Indigenous peoples based out of Northwest Territories was not lost on governmental administrators. This awareness is reflected on the maps identifying the extent of the territory falling under Treaty 11. As the Yukon government implemented hunting and trapping regulations, they sought ways to simultaneously accommodate and control the harvesting activities of Northwest Territories' Indigenous peoples within the Yukon's borders. This process included confronting the Treaty 11 rights of Athapaskans as they extended into the Yukon. In the northern part of the territory, the Yukon government needed to accommodate Northwest Territories' Gwich'in hunting and trapping activities in the Yukon. As Constable Johnstone of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police wrote in 1929 about them having to buy non-resident hunting licenses:

The Indians at this point, originally being Yukon Indians, have always hunted in the mountains in the Yukon side, ever since the Treaty was first made without any interruptions of any kind, and they could not understand why they should have to take out a license now.⁹⁷

When the dust settled, it was determined that the Indigenous peoples from the Northwest Territories would not have to purchase non-resident hunting licenses. Rather, they were to pay an export tax on furs.⁹⁸ Just as the Gwich'in resident in the Northwest Territories would have to pay fur export taxes, so would other Indigenous groups who participated in similar cross-border trapping activities, such as the Acho Dene Koe based out of Fort Liard.⁹⁹

Similar to other Indigenous and non-Indigenous trappers in the Yukon – and two-and-a-half decades earlier in British Columbia – the Acho Dene Koe's trapping activities were spatially

⁹⁷ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1892, File 12-8B, C.J. Johnstone, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, report to the Officer Commanding, Mackenzie Sub-District, Re: Patrol to Fort MacPherson, Arctic Red River Detachment, NWT, 7 January 1929.

⁹⁸ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3, GOV 1892, File 12-8B, G.I. MacLean telegram to A.B. Thornthwaite, Dawson, YT, 3 September 1929.

⁹⁹ The Acho Dene Koe signed on as adhesions to Treaty 11 on 17 July 1922. René Fumoleau, *As Long as This Land Shall Last: A History of Treaty 8 and Treaty 11, 1870-1939*, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 259.

circumscribed by trapline registration. In connection with their link to individual traplines, Fort Liard trappers were brought under increased surveillance. For example, in 1966, Royal Canadian Mounted Police correspondence discussed two trappers who “usually spend the fall, winter and spring months on their traplines” and had hunted too many moose while on their trapline.¹⁰⁰ While the trappers were not punished due to their honesty on the matter, this incident nevertheless reflected the increasing amount of scrutiny that individual trappers came under.¹⁰¹ This incident also demonstrated the limitation of surveillance within a mountainous borderlands region. As Corporal J.R. Gilholme wrote regarding the traplines of the two trappers in question: “Due to the remoteness of their traplines, they are rarely checked, however they have reasonably good reputations at this point.”¹⁰²

While trapline registration in the Yukon circumscribed the trapping activities of Fort Liard’s Indigenous trappers in the Yukon, it also provided a means of defending their rights to certain trapping grounds. Adding to their abilities to defend their rights to trapping grounds was the fact that they were under Treaty 11. As the Yukon government began registering traplines in the southeastern corner of the territory, disputes arose between Acho Dene Koe trappers and Euro-Canadian trappers.¹⁰³ In expressing their grievances regarding Euro-Canadian encroachments on their extant trapping territories, the Acho Dene Koe trappers stated that they were “treaty Indians” and laid out their history of trapping the specific trapline. Pierre Nande claimed:

I am a treaty Indian residing at Fort Liard, N.W.T. during the summer months, and then trap in the Yukon Territory during the winter. I have trapped in the Yukon

¹⁰⁰ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 12, J.R. Gilholme letter to the NCO i/c Watson Lake Detachment, Fort Liard, NWT, 10 March 1966.

¹⁰¹ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 12, J.R. Gilholme letter to the NCO i/c Watson Lake Detachment, Fort Liard, NWT, 10 March 1966; Mike Dwernichuk letter to J.R. Gilholme, Watson Lake, YT, 1 April 1966.

¹⁰² Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 12, J.R. Gilholme letter to the NCO i/c Watson Lake Detachment, Fort Liard, NWT, 10 March 1966.

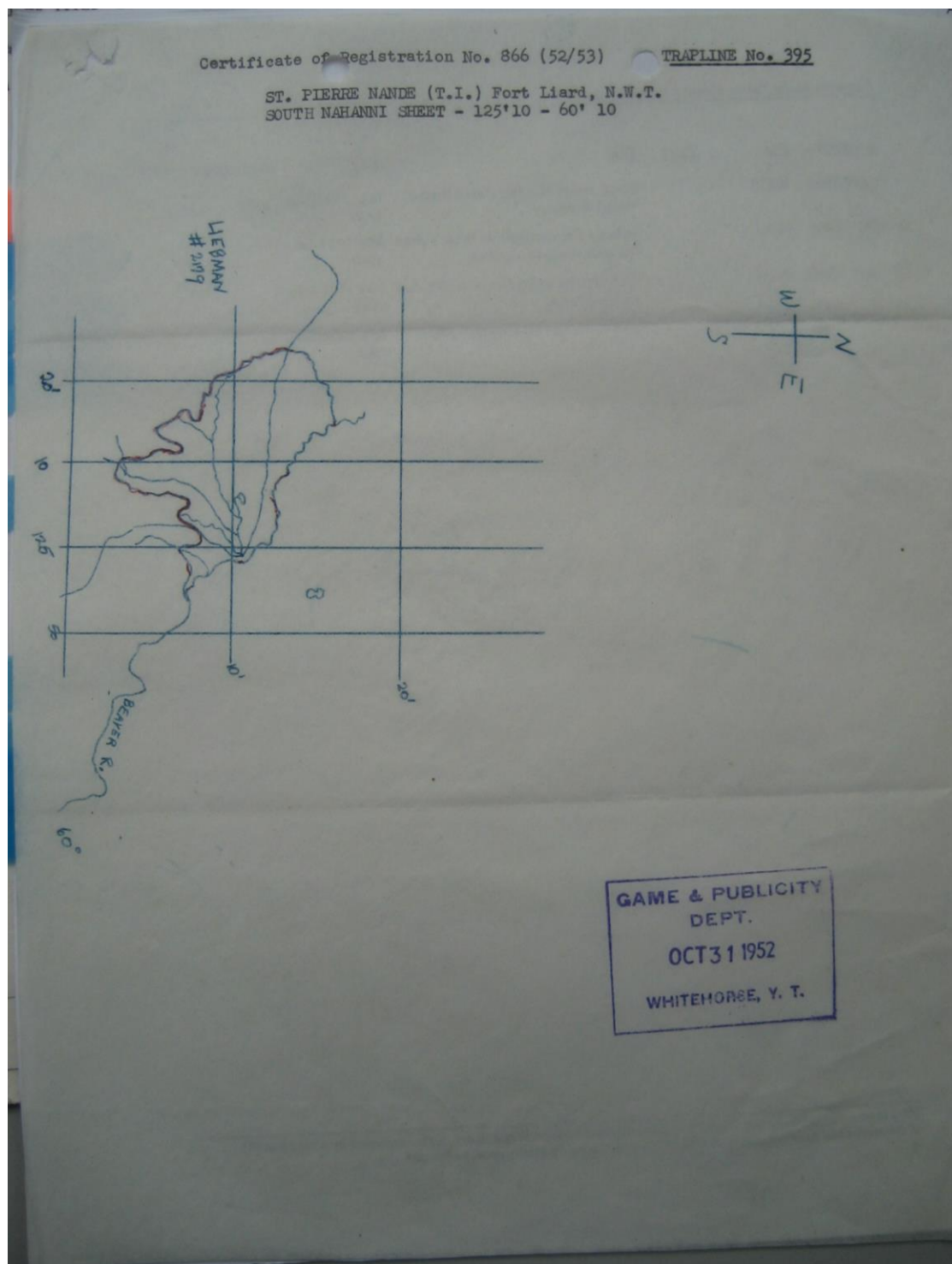
¹⁰³ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 12, Them Kjar letter to NCO I/C RCMP Watson Lake Detachment, Whitehorse, Yukon, 2 November 1952.

since 1936, except the period 1948 to 1951, when I was in the Camsell hospital for treatment of T. B. I wish to dispute the registered area, No. 279, held by Louis Liebman. The area which I claim is shown outlined in red on the sketch map attached to my application for registration. I built a cabin at th[e] mouth of Hot Spring creek [sic] in 1939 and based at this cabin, trapping along the Hot Spring creek [sic] until 1948. During this period I did not see anyone else trapping in the area that I claim.¹⁰⁴

Additionally, sketch maps were provided showing the area in dispute (Figure 5-5).

¹⁰⁴ Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 12, Statement of Dispute by Pierre Nande Regarding Registered Trapline No. 279 Held by Louis Liebman, Fort Liard, NWT, 10 September 1952.

Figure 5-5: St. Pierre Nande Trapline Sketch Map¹⁰⁵



¹⁰⁵ YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 12, Certificate of Registration No. 866 (52/53), Trapline No. 395.

The borders surrounding the Yukon have been made up by a mixture of arbitrary lines and lines that follow the natural contours of the land. While it is easy to see that arbitrary lines, such as the Yukon-British Columbia boundary that follows the sixtieth parallel, cut across pre-existing Indigenous cultural boundaries, the boundaries that followed natural contours were equally problematic. As individual jurisdictions, such as the Yukon, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories, implemented their respective policies concentrating on furbearer conservation, the effects spilled across borders. In response, government administrators tried to confront the consequences of these spill-over effects while Indigenous trappers sought to protect their own harvesting rights. In the process of governmental agencies coming to terms with Indigenous trapping activities in borderland regions, they participated in a process of defining the trapping territories of each respective band in relation to their neighbours. As demonstrated in Figure 5-6, trapline maps attributed trapping grounds to Acho Dene Koe trappers and Upper Liard Kaska trappers, respectively. The act of registering traplines to members of these respective bands served to establish a government-defined boundary between the two groups.

Figure 5-6: Map of South Nahanni Traplines, 1951¹⁰⁶



¹⁰⁶ YA, H-1600-1, South Nahanni – Traps, 1951.

While Indigenous groups such as the Upper Liard Kaska and the Acho Dene Koe registered their traplines individually, the Indigenous peoples of the Ross River region (now referred to as the Ross River Dena Council) opted for groups traplines. As the Yukon's Director of Game J.B. Fitzgerald wrote in 1965, "The Ross River natives are registered under three groups, and it is our intention to work with the local priest and Mr A. Kulan, trader, and obtain from them the natives now active in each group."¹⁰⁷ Even as the Ross River Dena sought to register groups lines, governmental officials endeavoured to delineate which individual could claim rights to trap on these respective lines. However, when trapline registration was first implemented in the Ross River region, lines were registered to individuals. This approach resulted in similar processes found elsewhere as trapping ground was taken up by both Indigenous and Euro-Canadian trappers, resulting in conflicts over land use and efforts to define land use. For example, Joe Etzel of the Ross River Dena had initially been excluded from trapline registration in the region. In 1956, a trapline between Sheldon Lake and Wilson was registered in his name. The line had previously been registered to Bob Simmons, a resident of Whitehorse, but Etzel protested the former's ownership of the trapping ground.¹⁰⁸

By 1959, the members of the Ross River Dena (then referred to by government officials as the Ross River Indian Band) registered their traplines in three groups (Figure 5-7). Each group line had a leader and members who would trap that specific line.¹⁰⁹ Ross River Dena Council member Arthur John, Sr. has described the implementation of group traplines:

Well, he [Indian Agent or RCMP] tell people to get certain ground eh, bring big map, me and Bill Atkinson we pick up all those area for these people. Everybody

¹⁰⁷ YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 12, J.B. Fitzgerald letter to J.L. Vachon, Whitehorse, Yukon, 24 June 1965.

¹⁰⁸ YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 13, John Dewherst letter to Them Kjar, Ross River, Yukon, 19 April 1956; Them Kjar to John Dewherst, Whitehorse, Yukon, 21 April 1956.

¹⁰⁹ YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 14, G.R. Bidlake letter to Archie Currie, Whitehorse, YT, 16 October 1959.

was out that time they come. And this people we know they trap there all the time, eh, so we give ‘em that land all. And we got everything written down, pretty near we finish, Old Man Jules, he came from Fort Simpson, eh, walk over. Then they walk in. He told me Indian way, he said, “Gee, you should of group that side, whole thing. We get one little trapline, he cleaned up everything, they going to be you going to the other guy’s trapline, it’s no good,” he say that way. “Better group them all,” [he said]. So we change our mind. I talk to him, then we did. We group ‘em that side, every side still group eh. Game warden come see me lots of time, want to chop ‘em up, but “No,” I tell him, “wait ‘til land claims settle down.” So, what we do, right here eh.¹¹⁰

While individual trapline registration gave way to group trapline registration, government officials endeavoured to maintain some semblance of knowledge as to where each Ross River Dena individual might maintain their trapping rights.¹¹¹ Geoffrey R. Bidlake, the Yukon’s Director of Game, wrote to Archie Curie of the Ross River Trading Post on 26 October 1959 that, “Out of the forty-three(43) [sic] originally listed on the three Ross River groups we now only have twenty-two licenced through this office. Please watch this situation, Archie, as the natives come in to sell their fur.”¹¹² During the process of rendering the reorientation of trapline registration around Ross River into a legible system for bureaucrats in Whitehorse, government agents depended on local traders’ knowledge about existing trapping activities. In order to ascertain who was trapping on what lines, information was communicated back and forth between government agents and the residents of Ross River. For example, group trapline certificates were furnished to the Catholic priest, Father

¹¹⁰ Arthur John, Sr., as quoted in Ross River Dena Council, *Dene Dechen Tah Néde*, 61.

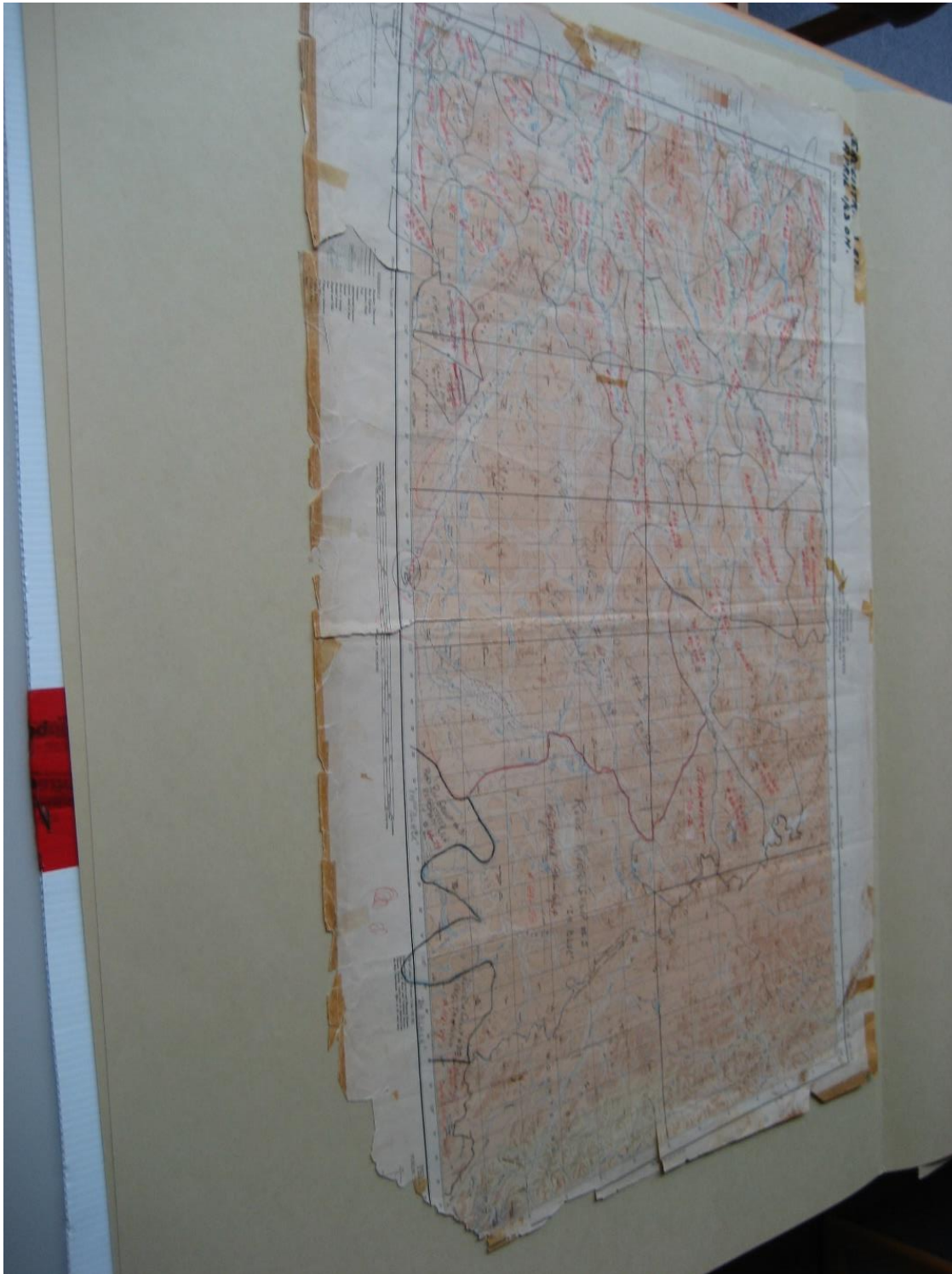
¹¹¹ In “A Northern Indian Band’s Mode of Production and its Articulation with the Multinational Mode,” 64, Dimitrov described the role of the Ross River Dena Band Council with respect to group traplines, as it had emerged by 1984: “All Ross River Indian trapping takes place within the boundaries of the Ross River Group Trapline. Traps, snares, cabins and caches are owned individually or by families, but no one person or family retains ‘ownership’ rights to an individual trapline. The Band Council assumes management rights for the entire Group Trapline and Group Trapline leaders assist in management and allocation of areas to different persons” (64).

¹¹² YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 14, G.R. Bidlake letter to Archie Currie, Whitehorse, YT, 26 October 1959.

P. Rigaud and the rancher, outfitter, and trapper, Tom Connolly. These certificates contained the names of the group trapline leader and the individuals who held trapping rights within the line.¹¹³

¹¹³ YA, Tom and Shirley Connolly fonds, 82/116, MSS 16, f. 1, Yukon Territory, Certificate of Registration of a Trapping Area, Groups Registered Trapping Area No. 25, 4 September 1958; Yukon Territory, Certificate of Registration of a Trapping Area, Groups Registered Trapping Area No. 24, 3 September 1958; Yukon Territory, Certificate of Registration of a Trapping Area, Groups Registered Trapping Area No. 26, 4 September 1958.

Figure 5-7: Map of Pelly River Traplines, 1963-1972¹¹⁴



¹¹⁴ YA, H-1601-9, Pelly River – Traplines, 1963-1972.

During the implementation of trapline registration in the southwestern corner of the Yukon, government officials also acquired information about the broader long-term movements of Indigenous groups in the Yukon. These movements were likely the continuing consequences of the construction of the Alaska Highway in 1942. The Indian Superintendent W.E. Grant wrote in 1961, "Some ten or twelve families from Ross River have moved to Upper Liard in the last few years."¹¹⁵ This southward movement resulted in a reshuffling to trapline allocation in the Upper Liard region: "Will you kindly advise if there is any possibility of setting an area aside for these people where they can do some trapping. At the present time, it is too costly for these people to travel back to Ross River for trappine."¹¹⁶ This movement southward was also observed in 1955 by Indian Agent R.J. Meek in relation to the Frances Lake Kaska:

Casual movement between communities five or six years ago has led to a permanent migration in a few cases. At Frances Lake the entire population has moved downstream to the Alaska Highway. At Dease Lake and McDames Creek almost the entire population is in the vicinity of the Cassiar Asbestos mine. At Stewart River the entire population moved to Snag.¹¹⁷

Moreover, as historian Ken Coates has noted, by the late 1950s Ross River was looked upon as a welfare problem and younger members of the community were encouraged to move to Upper Liard Bridge.¹¹⁸

Government efforts to define Kaska land use and band affiliations did not stop with the implementation of trapline registration. In 1961, Indian Affairs amalgamated five bands in the BC-Yukon borderlands. The bands amalgamated were the Casca, Nelson River, and Liard and Frances

¹¹⁵ YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 14, W.E. Grant letter to the Director of Game, Whitehorse, YT, 14 July 1961.

¹¹⁶ YA, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9, GOV 2154, File 14, W.E. Grant letter to the Director of Game, Whitehorse, YT, 14 July 1961.

¹¹⁷ R.J. Meek, "Report Yukon Indian Agency: A survey of conditions of the Indians of Northern B.C., and the Yukon Territory, for the Department of Anthropology, University of British Columbia," 1 March 1955, 40.

¹¹⁸ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 211-212.

Lake bands in BC and the Watson Lake and Frances Lake bands in the Yukon.¹¹⁹ According to Indian Affairs correspondence, the amalgamation of bands had been requested by the Kaska: “As this amalgamation was requested in 1952 by the Indian concerned, I believe you will agree that it should be completed without further delay.”¹²⁰ This amalgamation of bands built on previous government efforts to define Kaska band affiliations and the spatial orientation of their land use. Additionally, it demonstrates how the Kaska influenced these processes.

Conclusion

Trapline registration contributed to circumscribing and simplifying state understandings of Indigenous land use. The process of rendering trapping grounds, into single or group areas delineated on maps or as a list of latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates, served to reify boundaries and overlapping territories was papered over. Anthropologist Paul Nadasdy has discussed the process of territoriality as it relates to comprehensive land claims and self-government agreements in the Yukon Territory. In his discussion, Nadasdy observed that these agreements served to create different layers of land rights between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents, as well as among Indigenous residents. An additional element was the solidification of boundaries between various self-governing First Nations.¹²¹ While Nadasdy views the implementation of comprehensive land claim and self-government agreements as the watershed moment when territoriality began to exert a tremendous impact on Indigenous land use viz-a-viz neighbouring nations, this process began in earnest with the implementation of trapline registration. Trapline registration generally served to individualize trapping territories and

¹¹⁹ LAC, RG10, Accession V1998-00301-9, Box 1, File 801/1-1-2, W.C. Bethune memorandum to Assistant Indian Commissioner for BC, 3 May 1961.

¹²⁰ LAC, RG10, Accession V1998-00301-9, Box 1, File 801/1-1-2, W.S. Arneil letter to Superintendent, Yukon Agency, 24 September 1959.

¹²¹ Paul Nadasdy, “Imposing Territoriality: First Nation Land Claims and the Transformation of Human-Environment Relations in the Yukon,” in *Ice Blink: Navigating Northern Environmental History*, eds., Stephen Bocking and Brad Martin (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2017), 333-376.

allocated specific regions to the Indigenous trappers of each community respectively. This process, in turn, created boundaries on trapline maps between Indigenous communities, reifying notions of traditional territories.

Even as state officials registered traplines to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in an effort to somewhat resemble extant land use patterns, the lack of geographical knowledge on the part of the officials meant that traplines did not necessarily reflect the ground truth. In this respect, trapline registration risked stifling more complicated understandings of land use and occupancy. In writing about the *North Saanich Treaty* archival scholar Raymond Frogner suggested that the treaty was a legal fiction in which the document purported to provide “evidence of mutual expressions where none existed.”¹²² Applying this concept to trapline registration, it might be said that while traplines represented *some* degree of understanding of Kaska land use, they also represented geographical fictions.

¹²² Raymond Frogner, “‘Innocent Legal Fictions’: Archival Convention and the *North Saanich Treaty* of 1852,” *Archivaria* 70 (Fall 2010): 47.

CHAPTER SIX: “Change Cannot be Stopped but, It Can be Controlled”: Aboriginal Title, Environmental Justice, and Historical Narratives in Kaska Dena Territory

During the 1970s, conceptions of Indigenous land use took on new significance. During this decade and extending into the next, Kaska Dena lands became the focal point of various megaprojects. However, during this same period, the Kaska Dena’s influence over how their hunting and trapping territories were used increased exponentially. The increased weight of Indigenous peoples’ political voices and the proposed resource developments combined to shed new light on Kaska Dena history and land use. Past understandings of Kaska Dena land use gained new significance in the context of land claims. Moreover, as Aboriginal rights were debated within the theatre of land claims and emerging environmental impact assessment regimes, new historical narratives about Kaska Dena lands also emerged.

In 1974, the federal government created the Office of Native Claims. This new institution was formed to address two historical injustices. One of these injustices was the failure of the federal government to fulfill treaty obligations. Unfulfilled treaty obligations were to be dealt with through the specific claims process. The other injustice to be addressed by the Office of Native Claims was the absence of treaties. The regions of Canada where no land cession treaties had been made (which encompassed much of northern Canada and British Columbia) were to be covered through the comprehensive land claims process. The Kaska entered into the latter process. As the Kaska engaged in comprehensive land claim negotiations with the federal government (and eventually the Yukon and British Columbian governments), the history of their land use and occupancy was central to establishing their claims. As Kaska history was drawn into land claim negotiations, colonial records were integral to demonstrating Aboriginal title. These colonial records consisted of fur trade records, various anthropological records, and state records, such as

those produced by the Department of Indian Affairs and wildlife agencies (as trapline registration was implemented).¹ While these sources had the potential to strengthen Aboriginal title, they also threatened to circumscribe legal and government understandings of Indigenous land use. Consequently, as colonial records featured in studies that laid out Kaska title, they were supplemented – and sometimes undercut – by community-based knowledge. Land claim reports included community mapping projects and oral interviews.

The negotiating table was not the only venue for the Kaska to articulate their land rights. Concurrent to the emergence of comprehensive land claims was the development of new environmental impact assessment and socio-economic impact assessment regimes.² Historically, the Indigenous peoples of northern Canada had witnessed natural resource developments in their homelands, while the proponents of these developments demonstrated general indifference towards pre-existing land use patterns. Examples of this pattern within the Kaska's traditional territory include the construction of Alaska Highway and Canol Pipeline and the development of the Cyprus-Anvil Mine.³ As the land claims process commenced, the desire to further develop northern natural resources did not abate. For example, when Foothills Pipe Lines wanted to build a pipeline following the Alaska Highway to transport natural gas from Prudhoe Bay to the southern United States, the federal government undertook an inquiry examining the potential socio-

¹ A similar process is observed in Jean-Loupe Amselle, *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere*, trans., Claudia Royal, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, originally published in 1990), 159-160. Amselle describes what he refers to as a 'feedback phenomenon.' In this process, certain cultural elements are given privilege through their commitment to writing. These elements are subsequently given legitimacy through the Indigenous communities' appropriation of knowledge produced by administrators and academics.

² For a general overview of the development of environmental impact assessments in Canada see Brian F. Noble, *Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment: A Guide to Principles and Practices*, 2nd edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 21-30.

³ For more on the Alaska Highway and Canol Pipeline see Kenneth Coates, ed., *The Alaska Highway: Papers of the 40th Anniversary Symposium*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985); K.S. Coates and W.R. Morrison, *The Alaska Highway in World War II: The U.S. Army of Occupation in Canada's Northwest*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992); For more on the creation of the Cyprus-Anvil mine see Janet E. Macpherson, "The Cyprus Anvil Mine," in *Northern Transitions, Volume I: Northern Resource and Land Use Policy Study*, eds., E.B. Peterson and B. Wright, (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, 1978), 111-150.

economic effects of the pipeline. The Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry (AHPI) provided Indigenous peoples, such as the Kaska, not only the opportunity to express their views with respect to the pipeline, but also air their grievances regarding past developments. They also highlighted their historic and continued hunting and trapping activities. Through their testimony, the Kaska expressed their history and associated Aboriginal rights in a way that was not circumscribed by the colonial narrative or colonial records. Opportunities to express their views on resource development and advocate for their land rights continued as environmental impact assessments became more common.

The recognition of Aboriginal title in Canada that ultimately led to the comprehensive land claims process was the product of multiple developments that occurred concurrently across Canada. On 14 February 1973, the federal government agreed to negotiate land claims with the Indigenous peoples of the Yukon Territory. Ottawa agreed to negotiate these land claims based on the claim submitted by the Yukon Native Brotherhood entitled *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*.⁴ Two weeks prior to this development, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) had reached a ground-breaking decision with respect to Aboriginal title in British Columbia. Although the court ruling resulted in a loss for the Nisga'a litigants, the long-term effects of what would be commonly referred to as the *Calder* Decision was the recognition of Aboriginal rights in British Columbia. Meanwhile, in the Northwest Territories' (NWT) Mackenzie Valley, the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (MVPI) was set to commence. This inquiry provided a platform for the Dene and Inuvialuit of the NWT to draw national attention to the need for comprehensive land claims in northern Canada.⁵ Finally, in Quebec the James Bay Cree voiced their opposition to the

⁴ Yukon Native Brotherhood, *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, (Whitehorse: Yukon Native Brotherhood, 1973).

⁵ Paul Sabin, "Voices from the Hydrocarbon Frontier: Canada's Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (1974-1977)," *Environmental History Review* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 17-48.

provincial government's intention to harness the hydroelectric potential of the rivers flowing into James Bay. This opposition eventually led to the negotiation of the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* in 1975.⁶ This agreement was the first treaty or land claim settlement since Treaty 11 in 1921 and the first comprehensive land claim in Canada. The push towards land claims in northern Canada also fits within a more global context. Beginning in the 1960s, Indigenous peoples in other Commonwealth countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, advanced their own claims to certain rights.⁷ It was within this broader Canadian and international context that Kaska history and land use took on new significance.

Although the most concrete progress towards land claims emerged during the 1970s (in the wake of the late 1960s protest movement⁸), it is important to acknowledge the longer timeline of Indigenous efforts to secure treaties with federal and provincial governments. During the early twentieth century, the Nisga'a undertook efforts to secure a treaty with the British Columbian and federal governments. Their hope for a treaty were dashed by the *Indian Act Amendment* of 1927.⁹ Finally, in the wake of the Klondike gold rush, Ta'an Kwäch'än chief Jim Boss attempted to establish a treaty with the federal government.¹⁰ Although these proposed treaties never came to fruition, it is important to recognize these deeper temporal roots of land claims. By considering late-twentieth century Aboriginal title court cases and land claim negotiations as a product of longer efforts to secure land rights, this process can be understood both within the context of a

⁶ For more on the *JBNQA* see Hans M. Carlson, *Home is the Hunter: The James Bay Cree and Their Land*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); Caroline Desbiens, *Power From the North: Territory, Identity, and the Culture of Hydroelectricity in Quebec*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).

⁷ Miranda Johnson, *The Land is Our History: Indigeneity, Law, and the Settler State*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁸ Johnson, *The Land is Our History*, 1.

⁹ Hamar Foster, "We Are Not O'Meara's Children: Law, Lawyers, and the First Campaign for Aboriginal Title in British Columbia," in *Let Right Be Done: Aboriginal Title, the Calder Case, and the Future of Indigenous Rights*, eds., Hamar Foster, Heather Raven, and Jeremy Webber, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 61-84.

¹⁰ Ken S. Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 162-163.

longer struggle as well as that of the late 1960s and early 1970s protest movement. Moreover, this broader context establishes that the Aboriginal rights movement was not simply a product of outside, or southern, agitators – as was the contention by many opponents of land claims following 1973.

Comprehensive Land Claims, Narrating Land Use, and the Kaska Dena Council

Following the *Calder* Decision and the federal government's acceptance of a comprehensive land claims policy, various factors shaped the uses of history in the advancement of Aboriginal title. The *Calder* Decision and subsequent court cases were integral to outlining how history could be used within the juridical realm. Loosely following the court's lead, various federal government policies also shaped these historical narratives. During the early 1980s, as the Kaska Dena Council advanced their claims, the federal policy for assessing Indigenous land claims was laid out in a publication entitled *In All Fairness*. The federal government established both its intent with respect to settling land claims and the methods to be employed for demonstrating such a claim. *In All Fairness* stated, "The thrust of this policy is to exchange undefined aboriginal land rights for concrete rights and benefits. The settlement legislation will guarantee these rights and benefits."¹¹ In essence, the federal government's policy aimed to substitute what they considered vaguely-defined rights for rights that could be more easily delineated by the government.¹² Driving

¹¹ Canada, Indian Affairs and Northern Development, *In All Fairness: A Native Policy: Comprehensive Claims*, (Ottawa: Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1981), 19.

¹² This process is reflective of the state-simplification processes described in Scott, *Seeing Like a State*. In "'Property' and Aboriginal Land Claims in the Canadian Subarctic: Some Theoretical Consideration," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 1 (March 2001): 247-261, anthropologist Paul Nadasdy describes how notions of 'property' outlined in land claims would be inconceivable to their Athapaskan ancestors. Meanwhile, in "Imposing Territoriality: First Nation Land Claims and the Transformation of Human-Environment Relations in the Yukon," in *Ice Blink: Navigating Northern Environmental History*, eds., Stephen Bocking and Brad Martin, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2017), 333-376, Nadasdy describes how comprehensive land claim imposed territoriality on Indigenous peoples and their forms land use.

this point home, the federal government attributed its past negligence regarding land claims to their confusing nature:

Prior to 1973 the government held that aboriginal title claims were not susceptible to easy or simple categorization; that such claims represented, for historical and geographical reasons, such a bewildering and confusing array of concepts as to make it extremely difficult to either the courts of the land or the government of the day to deal with them in a way that satisfied anyone. Consequently, it was decided such claims could not be recognized.¹³

To render the “bewildering and confusing” land claims into a form more cognizable to the federal government, various protocols were established.

Describing the federal government’s policies in the wake of the *Calder* Decision, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development stipulated that “the federal government was prepared to accept land claims based on traditional use and occupancy. Secondly, although any acceptance of such a claim would not be an admission of legal liability, the federal government was willing to negotiate settlements of such claims.”¹⁴ Moreover, the policy stated:

Lands selected by Natives for their continuing use should be traditional land that they currently use and occupy; but persons of non-Native origin who have acquired for various purposes, right in the land in the area claimed, are equally deserving of consideration. Their rights and interests must be dealt with equitably.¹⁵

Federal land claim policies during the early 1980s reflected the importance of historical and continued use of traditional lands. However, they also protected the property rights of non-Indigenous peoples who had acquired land prior to the extinguishment of Aboriginal title. This approach was likely a product of the federal government’s desire to protect both Indigenous and non-Indigenous land rights.¹⁶

¹³ Canada, *In All Fairness*, 11.

¹⁴ Canada, *In All Fairness*, 12.

¹⁵ Canada, *In All Fairness*, 23.

¹⁶ Canada, *In All Fairness*, 8.

Further instructions for demonstrating Aboriginal title was conveyed in correspondence between the federal government and Indigenous organizations. On 5 August 1981, Peter Stone, the chairman for the Kaska Dena Council (KDC), wrote to John Munro, the minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Stone's letter was written in the aftermath of a meeting with Munro at Watson Lake, Yukon on 20 May 1981. The chairman wrote, "Our presentation Starting Directions, set out the funding requirements that would enable the Kaska Dena Council to be an effective political voice for the Kaska Dena people and participate effectively in land claims and major development issues."¹⁷ Elaborating on the urgent need for funding, Stone stated, "we requested funds to establish and operate the Council, prepare a proposal for a land use and occupancy study, conduct a socio-economic impact study of the B.C. Hydro project proposal and undertake some badly needed long range social planning in our communities."¹⁸

Munro replied by laying out the parameters for establishing a claim and obtaining the requisite funding for advancing the claim. The minister wrote that in order to secure funding for researching and negotiating land claims, the KDC need to "submit to me a formal statement of claim which I can have verified for conformation with the Government policy on comprehensive claims established in 1973. This procedure is not complicated and certainly does not require the expenditure of large sums of money."¹⁹ Munro elaborated on what should be included in the KDC's initial statement of claim:

It is suggested that, at the present time, your Statement of Claim be confined to a brief document which will formally state to the Government of Canada that the Kaska Dena people have, as original inhabitants, traditionally used and occupied the land in question; that the use and occupancy in the area continues at the present

¹⁷ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 3, Sub-Series 3-1, Vol. 17, File 1, Indian and Northern Affairs – Land Claims, May 1980-1981, Peter Stone letter to John Munro, Watson Lake, YT, 5 August 1981.

¹⁸ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 3, Sub-Series 3-1, Vol. 17, File 1, Indian and Northern Affairs – Land Claims, May 1980-1981, Peter Stone letter to John Munro, Watson Lake, YT, 5 August 1981.

¹⁹ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 3, Sub-Series 3-1, Vol. 17, File 1, Indian and Northern Affairs – Land Claims, May 1980-1981, John C. Munro letter to Peter Stone, 22 October 1981.

time; and that this traditional interest in the territory has not been extinguished by treaty or superseded by law. The Statement should include a map outlining the approximate boundaries of the area of traditional use and occupancy, as well as identifying those Bands on whose behalf the claim is being made. In its Statement of Claim, the Kaska Dena Tribal Council should request the Government of Canada to accept its claim under the Government's 1973 policy in regard to claims of Indian and Inuit people.²⁰

Munro proceeded to note that following the submission of the Statement of Claim, he would advise the KDC on the validity of the claim.²¹ In this respect, the minister affirmed what was laid out in *In All Fairness*: "Negotiations with a group will occur only if and when their claim has been accepted. Negotiations will then take place only with those persons who have been duly mandated to represent the claimant group."²² Finally, Munro cautioned Stone that even if the claim was validated by the federal government, it did not mean that the KDC would automatically be provided with funds to research and negotiate their claims. The reason why funds might be withheld was because the British Columbia government was unwilling to enter into any other land claim negotiations without first settling that of the Nisga'a.²³ While court cases instigated by Indigenous peoples may have advanced the debates around Aboriginal title, the federal government continued to dictate the terms through which Indigenous organizations could advance their claims. These terms shaped Indigenous statements of claim and subsequent research reports used to demonstrate Aboriginal title.

Following these instructions, the KDC prepared their statement of claim. While their formal land claim submission also included southeastern Yukon, in February 1982 the KDC outlined the broad parameters of their land claim in British Columbia. Establishing the

²⁰ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 3, Sub-Series 3-1, Vol. 17, File 1, Indian and Northern Affairs – Land Claims, May 1980-1981, John C. Munro letter to Peter Stone, 22 October 1981.

²¹ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 3, Sub-Series 3-1, Vol. 17, File 1, Indian and Northern Affairs – Land Claims, May 1980-1981, John C. Munro letter to Peter Stone, 22 October 1981.

²² Canada, *In All Fairness*, 27.

²³ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 3, Sub-Series 3-1, Vol. 17, File 1, Indian and Northern Affairs – Land Claims, May 1980-1981, John C. Munro letter to Peter Stone, 22 October 1981.

geographical boundaries of the claim and fact that they had never extinguished title, the introduction to the report read:

This claim being put forward is founded upon our people's traditional use and occupancy of lands bordered to the north by the Yukon border, to the west by Dease Lake, to the south by the Finlay Mountain Range, and to the east by the Liard River. Our people have occupied these lands from time immemorial. At no time have our people ever extinguished our aboriginal title to these lands. Although Treaty #8 was supposedly to encompass lands within our claim, none of our people were ever signatories of the treaty.²⁴

As per Munro's instructions, the claim was accompanied by a map (Figure 6-1). To demonstrate both their unique identity as a nation and their Aboriginal title, the KDC relied upon extant anthropological literature. For example, the claim stated: "The Kaska people are bound together by linguistic and cultural ties. The Kaska language is distinct and separate from neighbouring native communities. Anthropological studies confirm the Kaska people to have had very distinct cultural traditions."²⁵ The KDC stated that the map produced to accompany their land claim was supported by anthropological literature.²⁶

Many aspects of the land claim submission appear to be based on the works of anthropologist John Honigmann. For example, when describing the subgroupings of the various entities which comprised what would come to be known as the Kaska Nation, the KDC identified "the Frances Lake Kaska, the Espatodena, the Upper Liard Kaska, the Nelson Kaska and the Dease River Kaska."²⁷ These subgroupings were identical to those identified by Honigmann in his ethnographic reconstruction of the Kaska.²⁸ The statement of claim's description of each groups traditional territories matched that of Honigmann.²⁹ Although the statement of claim drew heavily

²⁴ Kaska Dena Council, *Kaska Dena Council's Land Claim Submission*, (February 1982), 1.

²⁵ Kaska Dena Council, *Kaska Dena Council's Land Claim Submission*, 2.

²⁶ Kaska Dena Council, *Kaska Dena Council's Land Claim Submission*, 5.

²⁷ Kaska Dena Council, *Kaksa Dena Council's Land Claim Submission*, 6.

²⁸ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 19-20.

²⁹ Kaska Dena Council, *Kaska Dena Council's Land Claim Submission*, 6-8; Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 19-20.

from Honigmann's ethnographic groupings, the map outlining their claim differed from that of Honigmann (Figure 6-2). This discrepancy may reflect Kaska Dena disagreements with the accuracy of the anthropologist's map.

While this initial land claim submission focused on Kaska Dena claims in British Columbia, the Kaska Dena Council was also undertaking efforts to advance their claim north of the BC-Yukon border. While there were Kaska who resided north and south of the border, the Kaska north of the border (present-day Liard First Nation and Ross River Dena Council) were negotiating land claims with the Council for Yukon Indians (CYI).³⁰ (Significantly, when the CYI voted to ratify the agreement-in-principle reached with the federal government in 1984, the Liard First Nation and Ross River Dena Council voted against its ratification, citing concerns surrounding the secrecy of negotiations.³¹) As *In All Fairness* stipulated that Indigenous peoples could not benefit from two land claim agreements, in June 1983 the CYI and KDC jointly expressed concerns that this policy would prevent cross-border land claims.³² Describing the various overlap concerns, the CYI and KDC stated in the brief: "the Kaska, or the southeastern portion of the Yukon commonly held to be Treaty 11 territory, including the South Nahanni in the Northwest Territories; the Mountain Indian overlap from the Mackenzie (Northwest Territories) to the Hess Mountains (Yukon); and the Peel River Kutchin overlap from the Peel River headwaters (Yukon) to Fort McPherson and Arctic Red River (Northwest Territories)."³³ Describing the potential implications of federal policies, the brief read, "those groups will be disenfranchised from the opportunity of participating in the settlement of lands upon which they

³⁰ For a detailed discussion of early CYI land claim negotiation see William R. Morrison, "The Comprehensive Claims Process in Canada's North: New Rhetoric, Old Policies," in *For Purposes of Dominion: Essays in Honour of Morris Zaslow*, eds., Kenneth S Coates and William R. Morrison, (North York: Captus Press Inc., 1989), 261-274.

³¹ Alcantara, *Negotiating the Deal*, 84.

³² Council for Yukon Indians and Kaska-Dena Council, "The Overlapping Claims: A Critique of Federal Policy," 9 June 1983.

³³ Council for Yukon Indians and Kaska-Dena Council, "The Overlapping Claims," 3.

have a legal and historical claim.”³⁴ The CYI and KDC concluded the brief by recommending an exemption to this policy for Indigenous peoples with historic claims to overlapping political boundaries.³⁵

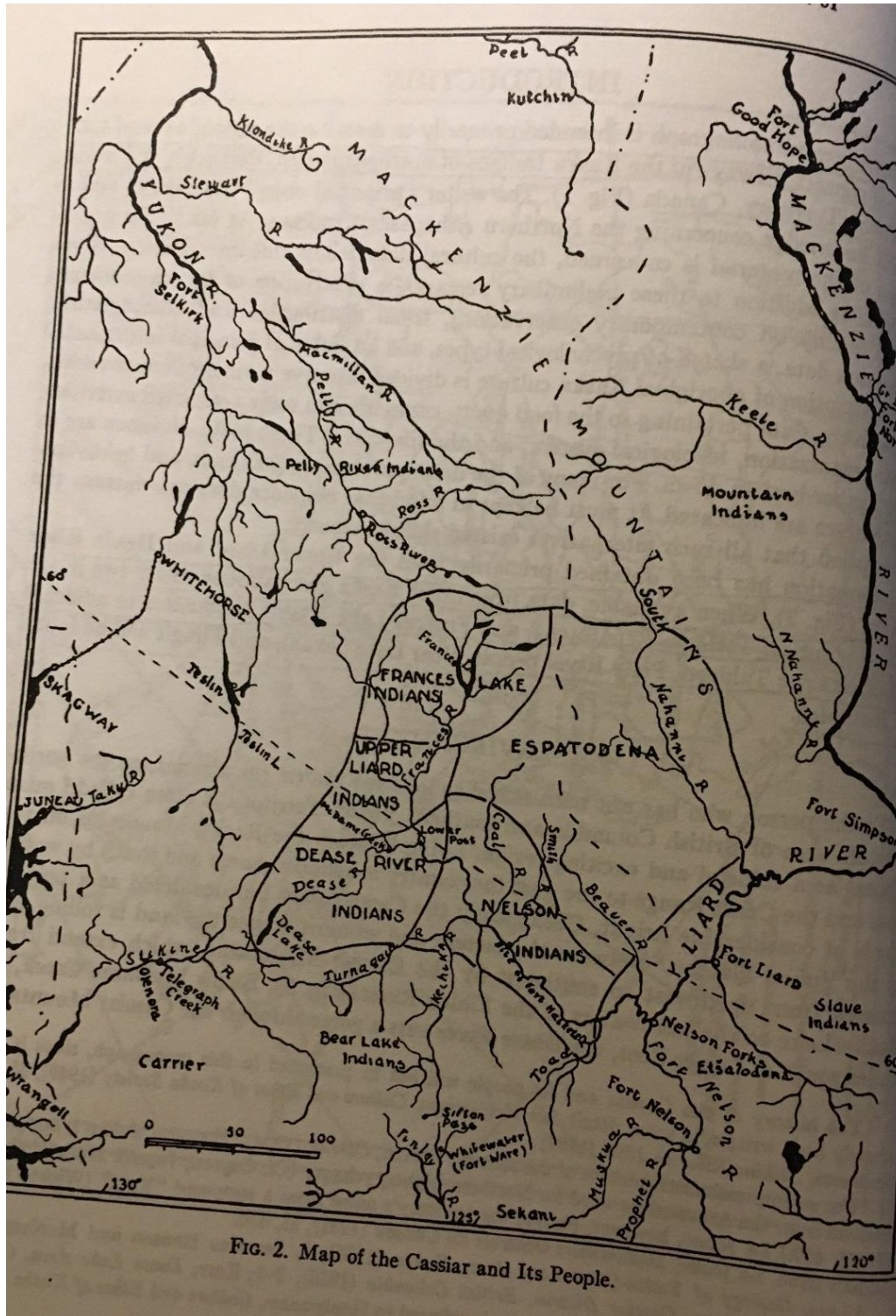
³⁴ Council for Yukon Indians and Kaska-Dena Council, “The Overlapping Claims,” 4.

³⁵ Council for Yukon Indians and Kaska-Dena Council, “The Overlapping Claims,” 6.

[illegible]

256

Figure 6-2: John Honigmann's "Map of Cassiar and Its People"³⁷



³⁷ Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians*, 12.

Although the KDC's Aboriginal title was historically-based, their statement of claim provided virtually no historical narrative regarding their land use. The extent to which they described the history of their traditional lands was limited to the introduction:

As even a cursory examination of historical and anthropological data will confirm, our people have inhabited our claimed area long before white contact. It is significant that our traditional way of life has not changed drastically since white contact. Our communities are still very much based on [a] hunting, fishing and trapping existence. In part, this is explained because of the relative isolation of our communities. In some ways, we have been the forgotten people in respect to the land claims issue in Canada. This is partly explained by our isolation, and partly by the fact that Treaty #8 was supposedly to have covered our traditional lands.³⁸

In the Statement of Claim, the KDC highlighted continuity of land use within their traditional territory. However, while not explicitly advancing a historical narrative, the KDC nevertheless indicated that the Kaska Dena's history was on the precipice of change. These potential changes were the results of proposed megaprojects – such as the Alaska Highway natural gas pipeline and the Liard Power Project – which threatened their hunting, fishing, and trapping economies.³⁹

While the initial statement of claim provided little in the way of historical narrative, later material on land claims used history more explicitly. KDC land claim materials set the scene to provide a narrative chronicling the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the weakening of their relationship to the natural environment.⁴⁰ In a 1985 KDC publication which laid out the broad parameters of their land claims, this narrative commenced by describing a cooperative relationship between Canada's indigenous peoples and nature. This portrayal was followed with a description of the weakening of these ties following contact with colonizers. This declensionist narrative culminated with a description of the dispossession of Indigenous lands and resources. The

³⁸ Kaska Dena Council, *Kaska Dena Council's Land Claim Submission*, 1.

³⁹ Kaska Dena Council, *Kaska Dena Council's Land Claim Submission*, 9-11.

⁴⁰ William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (March 1992): 1347-1376.

narrative was summed up as follows: “In the most recent years, Canada has passed by Indian and Inuit peoples and claimed the land for itself and all the resources the land contains. Today many Native people are barely able to renew the life and culture-giving partnership of the people and resources.”⁴¹ The KDC endeavoured to find a useful past in order to influence future events.⁴² By describing their historical dispossession, they hoped to readjust the course of history.

Similar, yet more detailed and nuanced, narratives were submitted in the Kaska Dena Council’s research reports outlining their respective claims to traditional territories in the Yukon and British Columbia.⁴³ The narratives advanced in these reports were based partially on the court cases which defined Aboriginal title and partially on the federal government’s policies for accepting a land claim. In the preliminary section of the KDC research report detailing their claim in southeast Yukon, report author, anthropologist Peter Douglas Elias, identified both the *Calder* decision and *In All Fairness* as elements that contributed to the validity of land claims.⁴⁴ Taking these factors into consideration, Elias – who had completed his doctorate at the University of Toronto analysing the metropolis and hinterland of northern Manitoba – identified three questions that needed to be answered in the final submission of the KDC land claim. The first question was, “What are the claimant group’s traditional lands?” The second question was, “To what extent are these traditional land currently used by members of the claimant group?” The final question hinged on the recognition that certain lands would have to be surrendered in the settlement of a comprehensive land claim agreement: “Of what value to members of the claimant group is the

⁴¹ Kaska Dena Council, *Aboriginal Claim and Territory of the Kaska Dena*, (Watson Lake, Yukon: Kaska Dena Council, Research Division, 1985).

⁴² Turkel, *The Archive of Place*, xx-xxi.

⁴³ Peter Douglas Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, (Kaska Dena Council, 18 May 1985); Peter Douglas Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in British Columbia*, (Kaska Dena Council, 31 January 1986).

⁴⁴ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 1-2.

current use of lands and resources?”⁴⁵ These three questions established the important components that the historical narrative would focus on. These components included establishing land use as it existed prior to the arrival of Europeans, changes since contact (most likely resulting from alienation of land), and contemporary land use. In order to go about answering these questions Elias relied on seven types or sources: household sketches, genealogies, map biographies, tape recorded interviews, photographs, household economic performance interviews, and documentary and oral history sources.⁴⁶

While Elias used archaeological evidence to discuss Kaska history prior to contact with Europeans,⁴⁷ the reports were primarily focused on the history of contact between the Kaska and colonizers. In his concluding remarks on the archaeological findings, Elias wrote, “There is nothing in the archaeological record that suggests the Kaska Dena arrived in the area after the first incursions from Europeans.”⁴⁸ These reports’ historical narratives relied substantially on the records produced by Indian Affairs and used them to simultaneously demonstrate their dispossession as well as assert Aboriginal title. While providing what on the surface appeared to be a declensionist narrative of dispossession, there was also a narrative of resilience suggesting the continued occupation of the territories that the Kaska had occupied at the time of their initial contact with Europeans.⁴⁹ Moreover, the research reports contained certain nuances to historical processes not present in earlier land claim material, such as the Kaska’s abandonment of the southeastern-most corner of the Yukon Territory, having been pushed out through various forces.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 2-3.

⁴⁶ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 5-8.

⁴⁷ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 9-19.

⁴⁸ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 19.

⁴⁹ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 44.

⁵⁰ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 40.

In these research reports, colonial records were complimented by community-based knowledge to support the Kaska Dena's claims. While past colonial impositions on Indigenous patterns of land use, such as trapline registration, circumscribed Kaska Dena trapping activities to specific areas, registration and the associated documentation also provided a means for the Kaska Dena to assert their land rights. The use of these records to protect Indigenous land rights extended far beyond the initial processes of implementing trapline registration. In addition to other evidence, such as fur trade records, trapline correspondence served as key evidence of Kaska land use and occupancy. Additionally, these records documented the dispossession of Indigenous lands during the twentieth century.⁵¹

Elias' reports used government records to describe Kaska contact with government officials. In the report discussing Kaska Dena land use and occupancy in the Yukon, for example, Elias described how government agents acquired knowledge about Kaska land use in the BC-Yukon borderland. Much of Elias's analysis focused on Indian Agent Harper Reed's evolving knowledge of Kaska land use. Elias described Reed's initial attempt to come to terms with Kaska land use and occupancy as it extended northward from BC into the Yukon Territory. Noting that most of the Kaska on the Liard River trapped northward into the Yukon, the Indian Agent had suggested that the Stikine Indian Agency should also extend north of the sixtieth parallel. However, Reed's description of the territory contained a geographical error, indicating that he lacked an intimate knowledge of the region. This error involved a non-existent height of land commencing at the "intersection of 58 parallel with 126 meridian" and proceeding northward along the "126 meridian to intersect 62 parallel."⁵² By noting this inaccuracy, Elias implicitly challenged

⁵¹ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*; Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in British Columbia*.

⁵² Harper Reed as quoted in Peter Douglas Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, (Kaska Dena Council, 18 May 1985), 30. The broader discussions of the inaccuracies are contained on pages 30-31.

the authority of governmental agents and the paperwork they produced. By questioning governmental knowledge (in this case, that of the federal Department of Indian Affairs), government records were viewed as ‘supporting’ documents to be used in asserting Aboriginal title without being the final arbiters of Aboriginal title. Rather, the Kaska Dena – through Elias’ report – were the authorities on their own land use and occupancy.

Elias suggested that Reed provided the first accurate description of Kaska Dena lands in 1931:

The Boundary Lines are as follows:- Mouth of Eagle River to Cottonwood Rv. up same to headwaters along height of land and over the head of Rancheria to headwaters of Moose Rv. Thence to Sayer Creek of Scurvy Creek and over to this side of Frances Lake some little ways down the river. Thence to head of Hyland River and on to top of Coal River – Beaver River – Smith River and Tobally [sic] Lake. Also Caribou Mountain and down to Devils Canyon on the Liard. Thence Munchoeau [sic] Lake and along height of land to top end of Muddy River and then back in to Eagle River.⁵³

Elias then stated that the boundary line identified by Reed corresponded with the boundary line described by members of the Kaska Dena community.⁵⁴ If the KDC’s initial Statement of Claim advanced in 1982 relied heavily on colonial knowledge, their research reports simultaneously used and challenged colonial records.

Elias also argued that Reed was the first government agent to appreciate the Kaska “as a distinct culture and political people.”⁵⁵ Much of Reed’s knowledge regarding Kaska land use was likely acquired through the process of registering traplines for the Indigenous peoples of the Stikine Indian Agency. Reed’s geographical knowledge was then used to demonstrate the continuity of land use from the mid-nineteenth century to the present.⁵⁶

⁵³ Harper Reed as quoted in Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 33.

⁵⁴ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 33.

⁵⁵ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 33.

⁵⁶ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 33.

In addition to the guidelines laid out by the federal government in *In All Fairness*, the Elias reports were produced within the context of the *Calder* and the *Baker Lake* decisions. While the 1973 *Calder* decision was technically a loss for lawyer Thomas Berger and the Nisga'a he represented, it nevertheless resulted in an acknowledgement of the existence of Aboriginal title in British Columbia and prompted the Pierre Elliot Trudeau Liberal government to negotiate outstanding land claims.⁵⁷ Following the *Calder* decision, there has been (and continues to be) several court cases seeking to further refine the definition of Aboriginal title and the associated duty to consult. Prior to the production of the KDC research reports, one of the most influential decisions in defining Aboriginal title was the *Baker Lake* decision of 1979. This court case centred around the effects of mineral exploration on the caribou population in present-day Nunavut. While the decision acknowledged the Inuit's extant Aboriginal title, the ruling was against the Inuit.⁵⁸

The *Baker Lake* decision also established prerequisites for establishing Aboriginal title:

The plaintiffs relied on a common law aboriginal title and to establish such a title four elements must be proved: (1) that they and their ancestors were members of an organized society; (2) that the organized society occupied the specific territory over which they asserted the aboriginal title; (3) that the occupation was to be exclusion of other organized societies; and (4) that the occupation was an established fact at the time sovereignty was asserted by England.⁵⁹

This context illustrated the importance of trapline records and other colonial records in proving a link between the Kaska Dena of the 1980s and the occupants of the territory at the time of the assertion of British crown sovereignty in British Columbia.

⁵⁷ Dave De Brou and Bill Waiser, eds., *Documenting Canada: A History of Modern Canada in Documents*, (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992), 571. In *Calder et al. v. Attorney-General of British Columbia*, three judges ruled that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 did not apply to British Columbia and that Aboriginal title had been extinguished through other proclamations. Meanwhile, three other judges in a dissenting opinion stated that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 did apply to British Columbia and that Aboriginal title was a burden on Crown title. A seventh judge ruled against the Nisga'a on procedural grounds (571-573).

⁵⁸ De Brou and Waiser, *Documenting Canada*, 595.

⁵⁹ *Hamlet of Baker Lake et al. v. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development et al.* in De Brou and Waiser, *Documenting Canada*, 595.

Elias described Reed's process of registering a trapline to the Muncho Lake Band in 1937 as the completion of Indian Affairs' official awareness of the Kaska Dena.⁶⁰ In making this statement, Elias appears to have meant that Indian Affairs had developed a passing – if not perfect – understanding of Kaska Dena territory. Additionally, Elias used trapline records to demonstrate the dispossession of Kaska lands as Euro-Canadian trappers took up traplines.⁶¹ Nevertheless, while these records provided valuable evidence of Kaska land use and dispossession, they also represented the states' view of land use. Trapline registration programs and the geographical knowledge acquired in the process represented efforts to render both Indigenous and non-Indigenous land use into patterns that were easily legible and regulated by the state. As political scientist and anthropologist James Scott has argued, “[n]o administrative system is capable of representing *any* existing social community except through a heroic and greatly schematized process of abstraction and simplification.”⁶² Trapline registration represented a simplification of much more complicated ground truth. Consequently, as the Kaska endeavored to advance their rights to the land in northern BC and southeastern Yukon, trapline records hinted at the scope of Aboriginal title but failed to tell the whole story.

As colonial records, such as trapline maps and correspondence, were used to demonstrate Aboriginal title, the KDC deployed a method called counter-mapping. Anthropologist Thomas McIlwraith and title and rights director for the Słatsin First Nation Raymond Cormier described counter-mapping as “a cartographic technique used by marginalized peoples who employ conventional means to assert their knowledge of lands local to them.”⁶³ Meanwhile, anthropologist

⁶⁰ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 40.

⁶¹ Elias, *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*, 29-40.

⁶² Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 22.

⁶³ Thomas McIlwraith and Raymond Cormier, “Making Place for Space: Land Use and Occupancy Studies, Counter-Mapping, and the Supreme Court of Canada's *Tsilhqot'in* Decision,” *BC Studies* no. 188 (Winter 2015/16): 36.

Brian Thom has noted that counter-mapping often conforms to state protocols.⁶⁴ When the federal government laid out the parameters determining how the KDC were to proceed with demonstrating their claim, they effectively circumscribed the KDC's counter-mapping efforts to these state protocols.

Trapline registration also provided additional means for individual Kaska trappers to defend their rights in the face of growing developments. In 1988 Charlie Chief, an eighty-two-year-old Kaska Dena trapper, dictated a letter to a younger relative.⁶⁵ In his letter directed to NDP member of parliament Jim Fulton, Chief lamented the roads, mines, and park creation that threatened his trapline. In his request that something be done, Chief noted that he had lived in the region since the 1920s and had begun trapping in the territory in 1930. Chief proceeded to state that he had registered the line with Harper Reed, the Indian Agent for the Stikine Indian Agency (referring to the Indian Agent as "Happy Read") in 1934.⁶⁶ While advancing his claim, Chief explicitly stated that he was not opposed to development, rather he wished to find a way to balance progress with his trapping needs:

I have nothing to say against, [sic] progress but the roads, town, parks, mining are all located in my trapline. By this all animals the fur bearing animals usually move far back as to other secluded areas.

At first I did not mind, but as the years have gone by, I also gone up in age. I am now eighty-two. So following, like the animals into the far reaches or corners of my line, is getting alot [sic] harder for me.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Thom, "The Paradox of Boundaries in Coast Salish Territories," 179.

⁶⁵ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), James Ross Fulton fonds, R 5284, Series 10-3, Vol. 101, File 4, Peter O'Neil, "Compensate trapper, MP urges," *Vancouver Sun*, 27 June 1988.

⁶⁶ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R 5284, Series 10-3, Vol. 101, File 4, Charlie Chief letter to Jim Fulton, 14 June 1988.

⁶⁷ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R 5284, Series 10-3, Vol. 101, File 4, Charlie Chief letter to Jim Fulton, 14 June 1988.

Additionally, one of his cabins was burned down by provincial park employees following the creation of Boya Lake Provincial Park.⁶⁸ In his letter to Fulton describing his use of the trapline, Chief based his claim to the land on the fact that he had trapped the land prior to its registration with the British Columbia government. However, by noting that it had been registered by the Indian Agent in 1934, Chief implicitly argued that the state had recognized his rights to this territory. Chief's letter to Fulton highlighted the complex and contradictory effects of trapline registration on Indigenous peoples. Trapline registration simultaneously imposed colonial concepts of land management on Indigenous peoples, while also providing them with a means to defend against further Euro-Canadian encroachment onto their trapping territories.

As sympathetic Euro-Canadians, such as Fulton, passed on Chief's story to other politicians and the general public, the concept that these rights existed prior to acknowledgement by state bureaucrats became somewhat diluted. While sympathizers mentioned Chief's prior occupation of the tract of land in question, they highlighted governmental recognition and endorsement of his trapping activities. For example, in a letter to Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Fulton stated, "Charlie Chief is practicing his existing aboriginal rights. These rights have been recognized by the Province of B.C. in the issuance of Charlie's licence of 1934."⁶⁹ Meanwhile, in an article published in the *Vancouver Sun*, journalist Peter O'Neil – paraphrasing Fulton – wrote, "The Kaska Indian, a trapper since the 1920s, is simply trying to practise aboriginal rights recognized in 1934 when Chief first got his trapline registered."⁷⁰ As Fulton passed Chief's grievances on to other politicians and the general public, there was a clear

⁶⁸ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R 5284, Series 10-3, Vol. 101, File 4, Peter O'Neil, "Compensate trapper, MP urges," *Vancouver Sun*, 27 June 1988.

⁶⁹ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R 5284, Series 10-3, Vol. 101, File 4, Jim Fulton letter to Brian Mulroney, Ottawa, Ontario, 21 June 1988.

⁷⁰ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R 5284, Series 10-3, Vol. 101, File 4, Peter O'Neil, "Compensate trapper, MP urges," *Vancouver Sun*, 27 June 1988.

acknowledgement of prior trapping activities followed by an emphasis on the provincial government's recognition of Chief's trapping rights.

With the emergence of land claim negotiations, the Kaska Dena were in a position to mobilize historical renderings of their land use and occupancy. However, as land claims research progressed, they also used community-based knowledge in order to advance their claims. Sometimes this knowledge was used in conjunction with colonial knowledge, sometimes it was used to challenge colonial knowledge. Simultaneous to the advancement of land claims, systems of environmental impact assessments were being established throughout Canada. Environmental impact assessments provided an alternative venue for Indigenous peoples to advance alternative versions of history and their concomitant land rights.

The Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry, History, and Kaska Dena Land Use

Four years after the federal government had agreed to negotiate land claims with the Yukon's Indigenous peoples, another forum emerged through which Indigenous peoples would be able to debate the territory's history: the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry. In 1977, Foothills Pipe Lines Ltd. had proposed constructing a pipeline following the route of the Alaska Highway to pipe natural gas from Prudhoe Bay to the rest of the United States. However, prior to the development of this pipeline, the Canadian government wanted to solicit Yukoners' opinions on the proposed development. The goal of this inquiry was to ascertain the potential social and economic effects of the pipeline. If the pipeline was to be approved by the federal government, a follow-up impact assessment would be undertaken in order to determine what restrictions Foothills would operate under.

As land claims became a central issue during the 1970s, Canadian perception of the northern environment also underwent dramatic changes. While typically viewed as a resource

hinterland, by the 1970s the environmental consequences of northern resource development increasingly concerned southern Canadians. This growing environmental consciousness interacted with the emergence of Indigenous land claims as a major social and political issue in the North.⁷¹ Environmental concerns and Indigenous land rights coalesced in 1977 when the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry made its way through the Yukon. In the southeastern portion of the territory, the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry – also known as the Lysyk Inquiry – offered the Kaska Dena of the communities of Ross River and Upper Liard an opportunity to raise their concerns regarding the proposed natural gas pipeline that would follow the Alaska Highway, connecting Prudhoe Bay, Alaska with markets in the southern United States. The inquiry also provided the Kaska – and other Indigenous peoples along the proposed route (as well as those peripheral to the route) – an opportunity to offer their own perspectives on history, resource development, and colonialism in the Canadian North. In conjunction with these alternative histories, Indigenous peoples were able to advance their own histories of land use. Kaska testimony during the inquiry discussed the various resource developments that occurred within their traditional territories and the negative consequences of these developments. However, Indigenous perspectives did not go unchallenged in the inquiry. While some White northerners expressed sympathetic views towards the historical experiences of Indigenous peoples and concern for the potential impact that the natural gas pipeline would have on the territory's Indigenous population, many others advocated the absolute necessity of the pipeline and extolled the virtues of past resource developments. It was through the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry that people debated the nature of past human-environment relationship in order to shape the future.

⁷¹ Jonathan Peyton, *Unbuilt Environments: Tracing Postwar Development in Northwest British Columbia*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 93-94.

As the Yukon's history was debated in front of Ken Lysyk, the chairman of the pipeline inquiry, these contrasting perspectives reflected divergent historical experiences with respect to resource development.⁷² However, in order to advance these contrasting narratives, framing devices were necessary. In his discussion of historical writings of the Dust Bowl, environmental historian William Cronon has argued in his influential article "A Place for Stories" that scene-setting was an integral part of how historians perceived agricultural development in the western United States. A progressive narrative examined the progression of land use from a wasted land (a land whose potential remained untapped) into a productive land. Meanwhile, declensionist narratives were generally framed as the reduction of a pristine wilderness to wasteland.⁷³ With certain nuances, a similar framework shaped the historical narratives presented in the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry. Proponents of the pipeline and defenders of past resource development generally viewed past development as a means of bringing northern regions into the industrial economy and drawing on the untapped resource potential of the Canadian North. To extend Cronon's progressive narrative to a broader narrative strategy, pipeline advocates promoted a 'Wiggish' historical narrative. For many, the pipeline inquiry became a platform to further advance the staples thesis, which suggested that Canada was formed and expanded through the production of various staple resources,⁷⁴ in a public forum. Meanwhile, the Kaska – while clearly not accepting the idea of an unpeopled 'wilderness' as a means of advancing their narratives – presented a more positive view of the Yukon as it existed prior to resource developments. This portrayal was similar to those presented in the KDC land claim reports. As they discussed the

⁷² The results of the AHPI were compiled in Kenneth M. Lysyk, Edith E. Bohmer, and Willard L. Phelps, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry*, (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1977).

⁷³ William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (March 1992): 1347-1376.

⁷⁴ For a more thorough description of the staples thesis see, Harold A. Innis, *The Fur trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian and Economic History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999 [originally published, 1930]), 383-402.

imposition of resource development into their hunting and trapping territories, Indigenous peoples discussed the negative consequences of these developments environmentally, culturally, and socially. While it might appear on the surface that they were advancing a declensionist narrative, this narrative was tempered by highlighting the continued resilience of their hunting, trapping, and fishing economy in the wake of these developments.

Prior to the Lysyk Commission, the Yukon had been subject to resource development largely directed by southerners and with little regard for Indigenous land rights or environmental concerns. The most famous of these was the Klondike Gold Rush. It was during this period that the Canadian government began its protracted history of not addressing Indigenous title in the Yukon.⁷⁵ Within their hunting and trapping territories, the Kaska experienced various developments which reshaped their livelihoods. While relatively isolated from the effects of the Klondike Gold Rush, the mid-twentieth century ushered in resource developments that had more direct impacts on the Kaska. The first major developments in the region resulted from American fears that Japan would invade Alaska during the Second World War. In order to protect the Alaskan territory, the American military pushed through the Alaska Highway, connecting the territory with the south. In addition to developing a transportation corridor between Alaska and the rest of the United States, the American military constructed a pipeline connecting the oil reserves at Norman Wells, NWT with the Pacific coast. This pipeline project was called the Canol project (short for Canadian oil). Military and civilian personnel pushed the highway and pipeline through without concern for the wishes of Indigenous peoples. While these northwest defense projects resulted in some employment for Indigenous peoples, they also brought epidemics.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 162-163.

⁷⁶ For a more detailed discussion concerning the effects of the Alaska Highway on the Indigenous population in the Yukon see Coates, ed., *The Alaska Highway*.

The next major development to occur in the Kaska's hunting and trapping territories was the development of the Cyprus-Anvil lead-zinc mine. In the years following the construction of the Alaska Highway and Canol Pipeline, the Canadian government began to invest more heavily in northern resource development. In 1953, the government formed the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources and launched the "Road to Resources" program five years later. These policies resulted in an increase in private investment in the Yukon's mineral resource sector and increased claim staking. It was against this backdrop that the Cyprus-Anvil mine was developed. As consultant Janet Macpherson has noted in her 1978 study of the mine, the Ross River Dena had directed prospector Al Kulan toward the lead-zinc deposits. Macpherson also noted that, while the Ross River Dena were involved in the initial discovery of the deposits, they soon found themselves marginalized from the economic benefits of the mine and suffering from the social and environmental consequences of the development. While a policy had been developed in order to incorporate Indigenous employment, it was largely a failure. Moreover, prior to the development of the mine, there had been no assessment carried out to determine how exploration and mine development would affect the Ross River Dena community.⁷⁷ The Cyprus-Anvil or Faro Mine is probably the worst environmental legacy that the mining industry left in the Yukon. According to the federal government, "Processing the valuable minerals at the mine left behind 70 million tonnes of tailings and 320 million tonnes of waste rock. This waste has the potential to leach heavy metals and acid into the surrounding land and water."⁷⁸

Through the first half of the twentieth century and expanding into the 1950s and 1960s, resource development proceeded relatively unquestioned. Developments such as the construction

⁷⁷ Janet E. Macpherson, "The Cyprus Anvil Mine," in *Northern Transactions*, Vol. 1, eds., Everett B. Pearson and Janet B. Wright, (Ottawa: Canadian arctic Resources Committee, 1978), 115-116.

⁷⁸ Canada, "Remediating Faro Mine in the Yukon," <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1480019546952/1537554989037> 14 December 2018, (accessed 8 July 2019).

of the Alaska Highway and Canol pipeline were viewed as triumphs of man over nature. Policies, such as the “Roads to Resources” program, were seen as a means of turning what was perceived to be wasted land into productive land for the southern economy. This perception of the land as ‘wasted’ was steeped in an ethnocentric concept of appropriate land use. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, this narrative was being challenged.

Though the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry did not attain the same degree of publicity, it followed on the heels of the influential Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, also known as the Berger Inquiry.⁷⁹ The results of the Berger Inquiry were released during the Lysyk Inquiry and one of its key recommendations was a ten-year moratorium on the construction of the pipeline in order to allow the Indigenous peoples to settle land claims.⁸⁰ The requests for a ten-year moratorium was frequently brought up by the Indigenous peoples who testified in front of the Lysyk Inquiry. For example, speaking on behalf of the Ross River Indian Band – now the Ross River Dena Council – Helen Etzel, an employee of the band, expressed their desire for a “ten year moratorium on any pipeline construction in the Yukon.”⁸¹ Similar to Thomas Berger’s recommendations at the conclusion of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, the Ross River Dena and other Indigenous groups sought time to reach a land claim agreement with the federal government. The need to settle land claims was often cited as either a reason for delaying the construction of the pipeline or a reason for out-and-out objection to its construction. Etzel noted that the Ross River Dena, “sincerely believe that it is essential and imperative that our land claims

⁷⁹ In *Arctic Revolution: Social Change in the Northwest Territories, 1935-1994*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 180-207, journalist John David Hamilton describes the extensive media attention devoted to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry.

⁸⁰ Thomas Berger, *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland: The Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry: Volume One*, (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1977), 196.

⁸¹ Helen Etzel as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, vol. 21, (Burnaby, BC: Allwest Reporting Ltd., 1977), 2663.

be settled and implemented before any pipeline development takes place in the Yukon Territory.”⁸²

The need for the settlement of land claims was also expressed by the Upper Liard Kaska. John Caesar tersely declared: “Should be land claim first, then pipeline.”⁸³ Significantly, neither of these statements reflect a complete rejection of the pipeline.

This request to settle land claims before the construction of the pipeline reflected one way in which the Kaska Dena invoked historical experiences in the debates about northern resource development. The Kaska were largely marginalized from the economic benefits of natural resource development. Requests for a ten-year moratorium and the concomitant settlement of land claims reflected the Ross River Dena’s historical experiences of marginalization and a desire to benefit from future developments. Etzel summed up these historical experiences from an economic standpoint: “we are on the outside looking in, receiving no benefit whatsoever.”⁸⁴ A similar sentiment was expressed in Upper Liard by John Dixon when he stated: “We know that you get lot of money for this country. Us country.”⁸⁵

While Indigenous people sought a ten-year moratorium in order to settle land claims, White advocates favouring pipeline development were skeptical of this plan. They fixated most of their attention on the ten-year moratorium. Some individuals questioned what could be achieved during such a moratorium. At Ross River, Don McKay – who believed that the pipeline development was inevitable – suggested that a ten-year delay would do nothing for Indigenous peoples. McKay stated: “I agree, as was stated, that the native people are not ready, but they will not be anymore

⁸² Helen Etzel as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2659.

⁸³ John Caesar as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Upper Liard, YT, 7 June 1977* vol. 18, (Burnaby, BC: Allwest Reporting Ltd., 1977), 2334.

⁸⁴ Helen Etzel as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2662.

⁸⁵ John Dixon as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Upper Liard, YT, 7 June 1977*, 2327.

[sic] ready in ten years, because they cannot stop development.”⁸⁶ Other, more cynical individuals believed that the Council for Yukon Indians had been dictating to Indigenous peoples what they should say in front of the inquiry. As one Addie Dieckmann claimed, “the people are not really speaking if CYI comes to the people and tells them what to say.”⁸⁷ Dieckmann’s accusation prompted the response from Etzel that the Council for Yukon Indians did not tell them what to say. Providing further insights into what could be achieved in ten years, Etzel noted that in five years preceding the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry, the Ross River Indian Band had gone from virtually no village-level organization to having an elected band council, a band hall, and a band office. Driving the point home, she stated: “We have more say and control of what happens in our village today than we did in the past.”⁸⁸ In these debates over the ten-year moratorium and the settlement of land claims, history was invoked in order to demonstrate the Kaska’s past marginalization from the natural resource industry. However, as demonstrated in Etzel’s defense of the moratorium, the Kaska also highlighted the advancements in self-governance. In this respect, various Kaska individuals established the parameters to advance a progressive narrative. The narrative trajectory progressed from a situation in which the Kaska were marginalized from resource development within their own territory towards a situation where they were about to control some of their own affairs. This narrative was then extended ten years into a hypothetical future in which the Yukon’s Indigenous bands, such as the Ross River Indian Band, would have settled land claims and achieved the ability to have a say and benefit from resource developments in their own territories.

⁸⁶ Don McKay as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2741.

⁸⁷ Addie Dieckmann as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2735.

⁸⁸ Helen Etzel as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2375-2376.

While the debates around the ten-year moratorium and land claims revolved on a short temporal scale, the pipeline inquiry also opened up debates over deeper history. At the heart of these two interrelated issues was a debate about colonialism in the Yukon. While the shorter time span covering the transition towards the Kaska Dena's ability to have a say in the developments occurring in southeastern Yukon reflected a relatively straight forward narrative, extending the temporal scale revealed a more complicated story. As members of the Kaska Dena communities in Ross River and Upper Liard testified before Justice Kenneth Lysyk, they discussed historical processes that ranged as far back as their first contact with Europeans. Moreover, as the narrative moved forward they discussed their experiences with various developments in their territories. Most prevalent among these developments were the northwest defense projects and the operations of the Cyprus-Anvil Mine. Alongside describing the effects of natural resource development, Kaska Dena individuals also discussed their continued hunting, fishing, and trapping activities despite these developments.

As the longer historical narrative was debated, individuals set the scene prior to the onset of colonial forces, which in turn affected the narrative's trajectory. For example, Etzel testified that:

Prior to any mining development in our area, the local native people relied mainly on the land as their means of survival. Also, the people at that time, lived in log houses that were built solely by themselves without the assistance of the Department of Indian Affairs. Welfare was virtually unknown during this time. Only some of the widows received assistance in the form of a small sum of money known as 'ration'.⁸⁹

Meanwhile, Margaret Dick from Ross River, speaking through an interpreter, noted that for the Ross River Dena hunting and trapping had been a communal activity. Following this statement,

⁸⁹ Helen Etzel as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2659.

she noted that many of the people were trapping alone as of 1977.⁹⁰ In her brief testimony, Dick provided insights into the decline of social integration among the families in Ross River.

These narratives commenced – either explicitly or implicitly – with the Yukon’s Indigenous peoples deriving a healthy livelihood from hunting and trapping.⁹¹ These narratives then described the gradual effects of resource development on their subsistence pursuits. The effects of these developments were wide ranging. Some individuals discussed how pollution affected subsistence patterns. For example, Etzel discussed the effects of the Cyprus-Anvil Mine on Ross River Dena fishing: “We have also heard of the two spills by Anvil Mines in the Rose Creek area. Rose Creek runs into the Pelly River, the river which we depend on for our supply of fish. If more developments take place, we would probably be experiencing more pollution problems.”⁹²

While some individuals focused on the pollution brought by resource development, others discussed the effects of disease. The southeast corner of the Yukon had remained relatively isolated from White society before the mid-twentieth century. Consequently, the northwest defense projects undertaken during the Second World War ushered in one of the last waves of “virgin soil epidemics.”⁹³ Mary Dick from Ross River – speaking through an interpreter – stated that during the construction of the Canol pipeline, “when the people came they had sickness and everything and most of the people died from the pipeline going through here.”⁹⁴ In Upper Liard, John Dixon made the same point with respect to the Alaska Highway. He stated that “All this old timer people

⁹⁰ Margaret Dick as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2675.

⁹¹ For example, see Rose Bot’s testimony in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2689.

⁹² Helen Etzel as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2662.

⁹³ Alfred W. Crosby, “Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (April 1976): 294.

⁹⁴ Mary Dick as quoted in *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2664.

die because the bomb, eh. They're not fit, you know, they're not fit for the army people to go through. A whole bunch of old timers down old place, they die out, because they not fit the army go through."⁹⁵

Finally, some individuals highlighted the peripheral effects of resource development. Developments such as the Alaska Highway, Canol pipeline, and Cyprus-Anvil Mine brought many workers to the North. When not working, these individuals needed recreational activities. A popular activity was hunting.⁹⁶ The issue of overhunting arose on numerous occasions during the pipeline hearings in Upper Liard. For example, Louis Pospisil, who MP Erik Nielsen described as "the lone white resident trader there,"⁹⁷ discussed the hunting activities of American servicemen during the construction of the Alaska Highway as a means to advocate for some type of firearms control should the pipeline be built.⁹⁸ At the same hearing in Upper Liard, shortly before Pospisil had made his point, Walter Tishiga also voiced his concerns about workers going into the bush during weekends to hunt.⁹⁹ While not explicitly referring to the construction of the Alaska Highway, it is likely that Tishiga's fears were based on past experience.

Some Kaska Dena individuals also highlighted the encroachment of governmental regulations into Indigenous wildlife harvesting activities. In one of the more colourful testimonies before the inquiry, Philip John Atkinson stated, "We get a hunting licence here, too, just like all the bloody honkies here. Hey, look wat happened to our land."¹⁰⁰ The Kaska Dena consequently

⁹⁵ John Dickson as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Upper Liard, YT, 7 June 1977*, 2330.

⁹⁶ Robert G. McCandless, *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History*, (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1985), 80-82.

⁹⁷ Erik Nielsen, *The House Is Not a Home*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1989), 233.

⁹⁸ Louis Pospisil in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Upper Liard, YT, 7 June 1977*, 2344.

⁹⁹ Walter Tishiga in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Upper Liard, YT, 7 June 1977*, 2334-2335.

¹⁰⁰ Philip John Atkinson as quoted in *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2738.

connected resource development and the expansion of state administration into their hunting and trapping territories. Kaska Dena individuals, such as Atkinson, were expressing concerns that ran much deeper than a pipeline, or successive industrial resource developments. The proposed pipeline became conflated with the broader forces of colonialism. The Kaska Dena were applying a different scale to assessing the potential impacts of the pipeline to that of many non-Indigenous peoples. A similar pattern has been described by environmental historian Tina Loo in her analysis of the post-development environmental impact assessment of the W.A.C. Bennett Dam on the Peace River in northern BC (which also affected downstream Indigenous peoples in northern Alberta). When describing Indigenous perspectives on the impact of the dam, Loo stated: “The Bennett Dam might have contributed to their problems—and for that matter those upstream in British Columbia—but from bands’ standpoint, the damage caused by the dam merged almost seamlessly into the larger impacts of centuries of colonization and structural changes in the economy that rendered many northern communities poor.”¹⁰¹ Historical geographer Jonathan Peyton has also discussed the use of a longer scale of analysis when describing the Association of United Tahltan’s production of environmental impact assessments when evaluating proposed hydroelectric developments on the Stikine watershed.¹⁰² Similarly, the proposed Alaska Highway Pipeline was another ‘seamless’ imposition from outside forces on Kaska Dena land use, much like hunting licences.

Although many Kaska Dena expressed the view that the pipeline should not be constructed for at least ten years, it would be too simplistic to portray their views as anti-modernist or anti-development. Industrial developments had already altered the landscape and certain modern

¹⁰¹ Tina Loo, “Disturbing the Peace: Environmental Change and the Scales of Justice on a Northern River,” *Environmental History* 12, no. 4 (October 2007): 910.

¹⁰² Peyton, *Unbuilt Environments*, 106.

conveniences were being used by Indigenous peoples in order to carry out their subsistence activities. For example, Jim Smith, after expressing his desire to continue hunting with his grandchildren, noted that they used skidoos to go out on his traplines.¹⁰³ By mentioning their use of skidoos, Smith implicitly suggested that he, along with other Kaska Dena, were not opposed to technological innovation and even industrial development. Rather, he also wished to be able to continue his hunting and trapping activities in the face of development. In this respect, the Kaska Dena implicitly rejected any notion of a timeless people and the idea of the 'ecological Indian' described by anthropologist Shepard Krech.¹⁰⁴

As White northerners sought to establish a progressive narrative around resource development in the North, they established a scene in which Indigenous peoples lived in a harsh environment. For example, in Ross River, Gene Pecka, an employee of Trans North Turbo Air, described his view of first contact between the Ross River Dena and Europeans, which occurred when Robert Campbell of the Hudson's Bay Company established a fur trading post at Pelly Banks in the 1840s. According to Pecka, Campbell encountered "a viable stone age civilization." Elaborating on this point, Pecka contended that "To survive in this northern environment required the greatest amount of skill, intelligence, and physical stamina imaginable. Tough people and an even tougher land."¹⁰⁵ Moreover, tapping into the idea that White people who had moved north were unleashing the latent potential of the northern environment, Pecka invoked the concept of the 'pioneering tradition.' Pecka commented on the "definite feeling and dismay by those who have had the pioneering tradition, and have felt they have built something in this land and finding out they are now regarded as exploiters, and fast-buck artists. Many whites are here to stay and look

¹⁰³ Jim Smith in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2673-2674.

¹⁰⁴ Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999).

¹⁰⁵ Gene Pecka as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2697.

to Ross River as their home.”¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, Addie Diekmann speaking in favour of the pipeline, after pointing out that Indigenous peoples used modern conveniences such as snowmobiles, stated, “Why can’t we face the fact that the old days, thank God, are gone forever?”¹⁰⁷

Individuals such as Pecka and Diekmann were not necessarily mistaken in their description of a challenging environment to subsist in. However, they also presented a strawman argument in place of those which Indigenous peoples were actually advancing. For example, Pecka claimed that, “There is a growing myth across this nation that if the white man would leave, the native would be left in a heaven on earth. The white man represents all that is evil in native society. The facts prove otherwise.”¹⁰⁸ However, the Kaska were neither asking for the complete removal of White people from their hunting and trapping territories nor the abandonment of industrial technology.

In an effort to advance their cause for the pipeline, individuals such as Gene Pecka provided their own historical interpretations. Pecka’s historical analysis involved both the local history of Ross River as well as a broader, continent-wide narrative. To Pecka, there were lessons to be learned from the destruction of the plains bison. While acknowledging the potential for environmental destruction that could be wrought by the pipeline, Pecka argued that people must also consider the potential benefits that emerged in the wake of destruction:

We must question whether or not the damage is so great that it negates the construction of the line. In historical retrospect let us examine North American plains and the destruction of the buffalo herds. All of us here are aware of it’s result; the starvation, the loss of the way of life for the natives of the area. Dire consequences in supposedly moral civilization, but we must look at the other side of the coin now.

¹⁰⁶ Gene Pecka as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2701.

¹⁰⁷ Addie Deickmann as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2716.

¹⁰⁸ Gene Pecka as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2698.

Presently in the world, only Canada, the U.S., France, Argentina and Australia export more food than they import. The plains region in North America is now the most productive area in the world, and without the starvation would be a fact in all countries of the world, including Canada.¹⁰⁹

According to Pecka, the environmental catastrophe of the destruction of the bison and the associated effects on Indigenous society paled in comparison to the agricultural development of the Great Plains.

Pecka proceeded to describe Indigenous history in Canada and, specifically, in the Yukon. He provided a progressive narrative in which colonialism had a positive impact on Indigenous peoples. This narrative was achieved through a combination of scene setting as well as the strategic use of active and passive voice. For example, Pecka suggested that the population of Indigenous peoples at the time of the AHPI was the “highest is has ever been, even with the decimation of various tribes through warfare, disease and starvation.”¹¹⁰ This statement is particularly interesting as Pecka did not attribute any causation to the warfare, starvation, and disease that reduced Indigenous populations. The claim is particularly selective with respect to disease because Pecka failed to acknowledge the role of non-Indigenous peoples as carriers of disease.¹¹¹ However, in noting the subsequent rise in population, Pecka found his active voice again: “White technology with it’s [sic] methods of travel, medical knowledge, and supply of food has caused the population of the Yukon natives to rise drastically.”¹¹² By alternating between passive and active voice, Pecka skirted the negative effects of colonialism and highlighted the positive. In doing so, he also cast

¹⁰⁹ Gene Pecka as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2696.

¹¹⁰ Gene Pecka as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2698-2699.

¹¹¹ In “The Seven Oaks Incident and the construction of a Historical Tradition, 1816 to 1970,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 2, no. 1 (1991): 91-113, Lyle Dick discusses the role of passive voice as a means to deflect blame for the incident away from a specific group (notably the Hudson’s Bay Company).

¹¹² Gene Pecka as quoted in Canada, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, 2699.

the position of Indigenous groups – such as the Council for Yukon Indians and the Ross River Indian Band – as being completely opposed to and outside of modernity. These individuals represented a different side of the same coin to that of the environmentalist movement which capitalized on the notion of Indigenous peoples as the ‘ecological Indian.’ While the latter cast Indigenous peoples as stewards of the land in contrast to modern developments in order to advance the environmentalist cause, the former juxtaposed this notion against the more recent adoption of industrial technologies to suggest that Indigenous culture had already been lost and that it was time to embrace industrial development.

In *Home is the Hunter*, historian Hans Carlson analysed the interaction of Cree narratives with southern narratives focusing on the hydro-electric developments in the James Bay watershed. He concluded that “we need to connect ourselves to the lands of James Bay and to write the Cree into our narrative.”¹¹³ In this way the Cree could serve as a mirror to society and reflect the meanings of their past and future actions.¹¹⁴ As the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry passed through the various communities in southeastern Yukon, the Kaska Dena advanced their own historical narratives in an effort to reshape how non-Indigenous peoples would view their past and future actions. However, unlike the situation in James Bay and that of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry did not achieve the same public platform. Additionally, the Yukon had a larger non-Indigenous population than other regions in the Canadian North.¹¹⁵ As a result, Indigenous groups – such as the Kaska – needed to not only reshape southern perceptions of northern development, but also those of non-Indigenous northerners who also

¹¹³ Hans M. Carlson, *Home is the Hunter: The James Bay Cree and Their Land*, (Vancouver: UBC Press. 2008), 252.

¹¹⁴ Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 252.

¹¹⁵ Liza Piper and John Sandlos, “A Broken Frontier: Ecological Imperialism in the Canadian North,” *Environmental History* 12, no. 4 (October 2007): 784fn.

viewed the North as a resource hinterland. Moreover, non-Indigenous people viewed resource development as a means of transitioning the Yukon away from this designation as a ‘hinterland.’

Through the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry, the Kaska Dena advanced alternative narratives to those praising resource development in the Canadian North. The Kaska Dena highlighted the negative effects of past development activities. However, they also articulated their continued participation in hunting and trapping activities in the face of these new developments, even adapting to these new developments. In doing so, they also challenged portrayals of Indigenous peoples as being opposed to modernity. In the ensuing years, the Kaska Dena were presented with increasing opportunities to challenge old narratives. The Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry presaged the later development of more formal regimes of environmental impact assessments which provided additional platforms for the Kaska Dena and other Indigenous groups in the Yukon to contest historical narratives and shape future developments within their traditional territories.

Environmental Impact Assessments and Kaska Land Rights, 1980-1992

As environmental impact assessments became more specialized, they provided additional descriptions of Kaska Dena land use. These descriptions emerged out of assessments or proposed megaprojects as well as retrospective analyses of historical developments. For example, in the early 1980s, BC Hydro proposed to harness the hydroelectric potential of the Liard River. A decade later, in 1992, a retrospective impact assessment was carried out on the Faro Mine. These two projects reflect efforts by project proponents and Indigenous communities, respectively, to shape understandings of land use. Following the AHPI, environmental impact assessments (EIA) became entrenched in federal and provincial regulations when assessing proposed megaprojects.¹¹⁶ Among

¹¹⁶ Noble, *Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment*, 21-30.

the proposed developments within Kaska Dena territories during the 1980s were hydroelectric developments on the Liard River and Pelly River watersheds. These developments were proposed by BC Hydro and the Northern Canada Power Commission (NCPC), respectively.¹¹⁷ As impact assessments were undertaken, individuals tried to refine their methodologies. One such effort to refine this process took place within the traditional territory of the Ross River Dena. In 1992, a retrospective Social Impact Assessment (SIA) was published on behalf of the Ross River Dena Council. The report's author, consultant Martin S. Weinstein, sought to use this SIA as a means of refining the science of impact assessments. Weinstein was a consultant who specialized in conducting impact assessments and traditional land use studies. By retrospectively evaluating the effects of the Faro Mine (formerly Cyprus-Anvil Mine¹¹⁸) on the Ross River Dena, future impact assessments might be more accurate in their own prognostications of similar developments.¹¹⁹ These EIAs and SIAs resulted in various portrayals of Indigenous land use.

BC Hydro's proposed hydroelectric developments on the Liard River was a grave concern to the KDC. In fact, this megaproject was cited by the KDC when outlining the urgency to settle land claims.¹²⁰ In a presentation to BC Hydro held in Lower Post, BC, chairman of the KDC Peter Stone described how damming the Liard River would affect the Kaska Dena:

¹¹⁷ The BC Hydro studies will be discussed below. For an example of an NCPC study see: Canadian Resourcecon Limited, Lloyd, Tate and Associates, Bentley Le Baron, *NCPC Yukon Hydroelectric Investigations: Socio-Economic and Land Use Study, Volume I, Socio-Economics (Draft)*, (Edmonton: Northern Canada Power Commission, April 1982). Part of the scope of work for this study was to identify the potential impacts on Indigenous hunting, fishing, and trapping activities; the "potential loss of options for future generations"; and the conflict of hydroelectric development with Indigenous land claims (I-5). The BC Hydro and NCPC proposals were not the first proposed hydroelectric developments within Kaska Dena territory. For example, in 1962, Canadian Utilities Limited proposed a hydroelectric development in Watson Lake, Yukon. See: Yukon Archives, Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Records Office Files, Series 1, Commissioner, GOV 2234, File 10.

¹¹⁸ By the time this assessment was being conducted, the lead-zinc mine in Faro was owned by Curragh Resource Corporation.

¹¹⁹ Martin S. Weinstein, *Just Like People Get Lost: A Retrospective Assessment of the Impacts of the Faro Mining Development on the Land Use of the Ross River Indian People*, (A Report to the Ross River Dena Council, June 1992), 4.

¹²⁰ Kaska Dena Council, *Kaska Dena Council's Land Claim Submission*, 10-11.

The Honorable Premier of British Columbia, Mr. Bennett, has been made aware of our organization. As B.C. Hydro is a Provincial Crown Corporation, the K.D.C. conceive that its projects on Kaska Traditional Lands can be highly politicized, although we are prepared for such occurrence [sic].

Damming of the Liard River which will effect land as well as the lifestyle of Kaska people in the two territories and B.C. is a project of such magnitude that priority must be given to our people in areas of direct participation and consultation.

The Kaska Dena know that change cannot be stopped but, it can be controlled. Our only option is to guide and shape the direction of change, so we can achieve a better life in the future.¹²¹

Moreover, politicians wrote to Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs John Munro describing the effects that hydroelectric developments would have on Kaska Dena land use. For example, the NDP Indian Affairs critic Jim Manly wrote to the minister stating: “B.C. Hydro is actively preparing plans to dam the Liard as well as sites E and A. Also you are aware, the northern pipeline and other mega projects will have serious environmental, social and cultural impacts.”¹²²

In the materials the BC Hydro produced in the assessment process, Kaska Dena land use was distilled to vague and generalized terms. In an information bulletin published in March 1981, BC Hydro described the inhabitants of the study area as follows:

The principal settlements and facilities in the Liard study area are located along the [Alaska] highway. Two communities, Lower Post, B.C., and Upper Liard, Y.T., are located near the B.C. – Yukon boundary. The residents of these communities are predominantly native Indians belonging to the Liard River Band (1975 population, 595). The Muddy River Indian Reserve, located near the confluence of the Liard and Kechika rivers, has an area of 71 hectares and is presently uninhabited. The Liard River Hot Springs and the associated 670-hectare Class A provincial park are located at Mile 496 of the Alaska Highway, near lower Liard Crossing.¹²³

¹²¹ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 3, Sub-Series 3-1, Vol. 17, File 1, Indian and Northern Affairs, Land Claims, May 1980-1981, Peter Stone, “Presentation to B.C. Hydro, Representatives, Lower Post, British Columbia.” 17 June 1981.

¹²² LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 3, Sub-Series 3-1, Vol. 17, File 1, Indian and Northern Affairs, Land Claims, May 1980-1981, Jim Manly letter to John Munro, Ottawa, Ontario, 17 July 1981.

¹²³ BC Hydro, *Liard River Hydroelectric Studies: Information Bulletin No. 3*, (B.C. Hydro, March 1981), 5.

Describing the potential effects of sites E and A, BC Hydro indicated that the dams would not flood the Indigenous communities at Lower Post and Upper Liard. Instead of flooding communities, BC Hydro suggested that these developments would “flood uninhabited Muddy River Indian Reserve near the Liard – Kechika confluence.”¹²⁴ Describing how flooding and other ancillary changes to the landscape would affect local land use, BC Hydro stated:

Flooding, the creation of new access roads, the influx of construction crews and other project-related activities would have some effects on the style of life in the area. Local trappers and professional guides and outfitters would likely experience both beneficial and negative effects on their incomes due to development of new access to the area. Reductions to the annual allowable timber cut, principally of spruce, brought about by flooding of potentially productive forest stands has been estimated at 60,000 to 80,000 m³. This would represent about half the annual cut of a small B.C. interior sawmill.¹²⁵

In a later report describing how BC Hydro intended to go about mitigating hydroelectric development’s effects on extant land use, the crown corporation stated: “If registered traplines, guide territories or other uses occur in the area, B.C. Hydro will meet with the appropriate land users to exchange information and identify areas of concern in an effort to minimize potential impacts.”¹²⁶ In both instances no effort was made to disentangle Indigenous interests for the land from other interests in the land. Additionally, the reports did not discuss the historical roots of the Kaska Dena’s Aboriginal title. Finally, the reports did not discuss the cultural significance of the extant land use patterns that would be affected.

In response to the proposed hydroelectric developments along the Liard River, the KDC produced their own report. This impact assessment was undertaken in the context of a push towards

¹²⁴ BC Hydro, *Information Bulletin No. 3*, 8.

¹²⁵ BC Hydro, *Information Bulletin No. 3*, 9.

¹²⁶ BC Hydro, Generation Planning Department, System Engineering Division, *Liard River Hydroelectric Development: Outline of Proposed Engineering Site Investigations, 1982 to 1987*, (Vancouver: BC Hydro, Community Relations Department, May 1982), 15.

band-controlled impact assessments.¹²⁷ Recognizing the potential cross border impacts of the developments, KDC chairman Peter Stone sent a copy of the report to Chris Pearson, the government leader of the Yukon Territorial Government (YTG). In sending this report to Pearson, Stone enclosed a letter stating: “While the proposed developments will not occur in Yukon, the impacts, should the project proceed, will be felt north of the B.C. – Yukon border. I request that you review the enclosed documents and advise us as to the Yukon Territorial Government’s position respecting B.C. Hydro’s plans for the Liard River.”¹²⁸

The KDC report began with a series of epigraphs containing statements from various Kaska Dena community members. One of these statements – provided by a Kaska Dena individual named Jimmy Porter – conveyed the value of the land and, in particular, the value of trapping grounds, to community members: “I live in this land all my life[,] my family and my forefathers before me and my kids live off this land[.] I can’t sell our trapline. Money no good but our land is here all the time.”¹²⁹ The report contextualized Porter’s statement: “Jimmy Porter’s quote was expressed to a BC Hydro employee who on two occasions (December ’82 April ’83) approached him inquiring as to how much money he wants in return for his land (trapline).”¹³⁰ BC Hydro’s offer of compensation to Porter further reflects their lack of understanding of the cultural significance of trapping to the Kaska Dena. Moreover, this incident demonstrates who registered traplines had

¹²⁷ Peter Petkov Dimitrov, “A Northern Indian Band’s Mode of Production and its Articulation with the Multinational Mode,” (MSc. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1984), 5-8. Dimitrov has noted that impact assessments were often based on ethnocentric assumption and did not reflect cultural variations.

¹²⁸ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Peter Stone letter to Chris Pearson, Watson Lake, Yukon, 28 April 1983.

¹²⁹ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Kaska Dena Council, *A Comprehensive Report on BC Hydro’s Proposed Liard River Hydroelectric Project*, (Lower Post, BC: Kaska Dena Council, 27 April 1983), I-2.

¹³⁰ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Kaska Dena Council, *BC Hydro’s Proposed Liard River Hydroelectric Project*, I-2.

become a means of protecting Indigenous land use. Other quotes at the beginning of the report highlighted the importance of hunting, fishing, trapping, and berry picking to the Kaska Dena.¹³¹

Although some individuals referred to the importance of traplines as a means of asserting their land rights in the face of a proposed megaproject, the KDC also described land use as it existed prior to the implementation of registered traplines. In a section of the report entitled “Kaska Traditional Land Use and Occupancy,” the KDC described the wide tracts of land over which they trapped:

One could travel the width and breadth of the territory by the network of trail that existed, cross-crossing the country. Kaska families had traditional areas where they travelled and trapped, year after year, but [sic] they were not restricted to those specific areas and were free to move [to] other areas in order to follow the game. This pattern of nomadic movement helped to minimize the effects of overharvesting of resources and ensured there was a constant supply of game.¹³²

In addition to making a statement regarding Kaska Dena trapping activities within the footprint of the hydroelectric development, the description also offered a subtle critique of the ways that trapline registration circumscribed their trapping activities and inhibited their methods of conserving furbearers. In spite of this critique, however, the existence of traplines was used with other evidence to prove the importance of the region to the Kaska Dena:

There is no question that the Kaska used and occupied the land in question. Evidence of traditional and present usage is found everywhere. Scattered throughout the flood area are traplines; cabins; gravesites; trails; lakes, rivers and creeks used for beaver hunts and fishing; caches; fish camps; gathering places; and battle grounds. This is evidence in itself that the area was and still is used and occupied by the Kaska. This area has been utilized by the Kaska and their ancestors

¹³¹ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Kaska Dena Council, *BC Hydro's Proposed Liard River Hydroelectric Project*, I-1.

¹³² LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Kaska Dena Council, *BC Hydro's Proposed Liard River Hydroelectric Project*, II-160.

for centuries. Lower Post and Fort Ware, the largest of the five Kaska communities, are both traditional gathering places.¹³³

While not directly citing historical records, by invoking traplines within the flood area the KDC drew on the historical legacy of compulsory trapline registration.

While BC Hydro framed their analysis of the potential effects of the hydroelectric developments through generalized conceptions of land use and requisite compensation for affected land use, the KDC were more concerned about self-determination. The KDC laid out the importance of determining the types of developments that occurred within their territory:

We, the Kaska Dena are at a crucial moment in our long history[.] Fundamental issues which effect our very existence confront us today[.] Decisions that will be made are not merely about hydro-electric projects or mining developments or pipelines; they are about self-determination, the protection of the environment and the future of a distinct people.¹³⁴

Similar to the testimony provided during the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry, the KDC emphasized the need to settle land claims while also noting that they were not opposed to development. Elaborating on their position on development within their traditional territory, the KDC stated: “We are for development. But we are for the kind of development which does not erase our culture but guarantees our long-term protection.”¹³⁵

As the Kaska Dena endeavoured to come to terms with the potential impacts of the flooding that would accompany the hydroelectric developments on the Liard River, they considered how this would affect existing reserves, in addition to harvesting activities. For example, one of the reservoirs posed a threat to a reserve on the Kechika River. This threat to the reserve raised

¹³³ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Kaska Dena Council, *BC Hydro's Proposed Liard River Hydroelectric Project*, II-161-II162.

¹³⁴ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Kaska Dena Council, *BC Hydro's Proposed Liard River Hydroelectric Project*, I-3.

¹³⁵ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Kaska Dena Council, *BC Hydro's Proposed Liard River Hydroelectric Project*, I-4.

questions about the expropriation of land from the KDC in the absence of a land claim agreement.¹³⁶ As the KDC discussed their connection to the reserve, they drew on history: “As a result of the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission Report in 1916, nine Indian Reserves were recommended in the Kaska Dena Land Claim area along the Dease and Liard Rivers.”¹³⁷ One of these reserves was the Muddy River #1 Indian Reserve, located at the confluence of the Liard and Kechika Rivers. In addition to drawing on the McKenna-McBride Commission, the KDC also described the 1961 amalgamation of Kaska bands.¹³⁸ Finally, the KDC established the importance of the Kechika Reserve to their land claim negotiations. In doing so, the report referenced the KDC land claim submission:

The intention of the Kaska Dena Council members at the present time is to retain the Kechika Reserve, and to continue to press, through the Kaska Dena Council, a Land Claim filed with the Federal Government in February, 1982. This claim includes land surrounding and including the Kechika Reserve.¹³⁹

As the KDC established the significance of the Kechika Reserve, they drew on colonial historical resources as well as their land claim submission.

The 1992 retrospective assessment of the impact of the Faro Mine was undertaken for two reasons. The first reason was connected to land claims. Weinstein wrote in the report’s introduction, “an understanding of the nature of past impact from industrial scale resource development experienced by native hunting/ trapping economies in the Yukon would be useful for the implementation of impact assessment and compensation/ mitigation measures of the Yukon

¹³⁶ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Kaska Dena Council, *BC Hydro’s Proposed Liard River Hydroelectric Project*, II-95.

¹³⁷ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Kaska Dena Council, *BC Hydro’s Proposed Liard River Hydroelectric Project*, II-96.

¹³⁸ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Kaska Dena Council, *BC Hydro’s Proposed Liard River Hydroelectric Project*, II-96-II-97.

¹³⁹ LAC, James Ross Fulton fonds, R5284, Series 5, Sub-Series 5-1, Vol. 38, File 3, Kaska Dena Council, *BC Hydro’s Proposed Liard River Hydroelectric Project*, II-97.

land claim agreement.”¹⁴⁰ The second reason was to make “a contribution to the development of impact assessment as a science.”¹⁴¹

Methodology was integral to shaping the types of evidence that would be used in the SIA and the historical narrative that followed. As no impact assessment had been undertaken when the Faro Mine was first developed, Weinstein gathered two types of information. First, he gathered ‘baseline’ data in order to reconstruct Ross River Dena land use as it existed prior to what he referred to as “change events.” The second type of information he gathered was “a time-series of information which monitors and documents the changes.”¹⁴² Weinstein sought to document how Ross River Dena land use had changed over time as a result of the Faro Mine.

Another element influencing the shape of the knowledge presented in the report was the assessment model that was used. Weinstein identified two types of models. The first model was the ‘modernization/acculturation’ model. This model was predicated on the assumption that traditional forms of subsistence land use would be abandoned in favour of industrial modernization. Elaborating on this model, Weinstein stated, “If this logic is followed to its completion, land use and resource harvesting considerations only need to be addressed as recreational impacts.”¹⁴³ The assessments carried out by BC Hydro were reflective of the ‘modernization/acculturation’ model. The second model, which Weinstein chose to employ, was the ‘subsistence/adaptation’ model. This model:

assumes that land and resource use on the traditional lands of the native group in question is a primary value for these societies. The value is economic in part, but goes beyond the returns from food and fur production to issues of meaning and satisfaction of life. The model also assumes that ‘modernization’ for northern native

¹⁴⁰ Weinstein, *Just Like People Get Lost*, 4.

¹⁴¹ Weinstein, *Just Like People Get Lost*, 4.

¹⁴² Weinstein, *Just Like People Get Lost*, 5-6.

¹⁴³ Weinstein, *Sometimes People Get Lost*, 10.

groups includes the adaptation of subsistence to village residence and wage employment.¹⁴⁴

Choosing the ‘subsistence/adaptation’ model ensured that Weinstein evaluated past Indigenous subsistence practices from a more compassionate perspective. Rather than simply distilling historical land use down to economics, he considered how vital it was to Ross River Dena culture.¹⁴⁵ This model avoided building up dichotomies between modernization and Indigenous culture. This model informed the narrative trajectory of the report. Elaborating on the continued importance of subsistence pursuits in the face of resource developments, Weinstein wrote: “The connectedness with the environment, animals and other people, which the land provides, is all the more important during times of great social change and dislocation, as has often been brought out by native people at public hearings.”¹⁴⁶

The retrospective SIA also provided new forms of knowledge in order to shape understandings of Ross River Dena land use and occupancy. Similar to the KDC land claims reports’ use of community-based knowledge, Weinstein also looked to the community to inform him on land use prior to the development of the mine at Faro. Describing the design of the SIA, Weisman wrote:

The study necessarily relied on re-call information. The methods used rely on the abilities of people who were affected by the direct land and resource effects of the mining development to remember changes to their land use. The reliance on memory as a source of data is not unusual in native impact assessment, especially those dealing with land use. Other sources of information are inherently incomplete. There are 3 possible sources of information about native land use: the memories of living users; government administrative files; and the direct experience of

¹⁴⁴ Weinstein, *Sometimes People Get Lost*, 10-11.

¹⁴⁵ Such an attitude is reflected in the conclusion of *Sometimes People Get Lost*, in which Weinstein writes: “Research over the last 2 decades has established that subsistence is the core system of organization in the lives and culture of northern hunting peoples in Canada. It is not simply an economic activity – a means to obtain food and cash. For the Kaska, being on the land combines making a living, expressing a living/evolving culture and finding satisfaction in life” (151).

¹⁴⁶ Weinstein, *Sometimes People Get Lost*, 151.

professional observers through participant observation. For this study only the first was available.¹⁴⁷

Elaborating on the problems with using government administrative files when analysing the effects of the mine, Weinstein singled out trapline records: “It is misleading ... to consider these kinds of records as accurate information about use without verifying them with the users, because native decisions about which lands to harvest do not necessarily follow the fixed rules of government tenures.”¹⁴⁸ Thus, community-based knowledge played an increasingly important role in drawing attention to Indigenous peoples’ historical experiences with colonialism. This knowledge was becoming crucial in their efforts to secure environmental justice in the face of both past and future developments in their traditional territories. Colonial documents such as trapline records held a similar role in the SIA that they did in the KDC land claim reports. These documents reflected state understandings of Indigenous land use. However, the records required verification from Indigenous land users.

Conclusion

Land claims and environmental impact assessments provided the Kaska Dena with opportunities to advance their land rights in multiple forms. These different forums also provided them with opportunities to use history to articulate their rights in diverse ways. While formal land claims submissions were bound by juridical ruling relating to Aboriginal title and federal policies, environmental assessments, such as the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry, were not. Land claim submissions needed to follow a specific formula outlined by the federal government. Meanwhile, in the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry, the Kaska Dena could use multiple time scales to advance

¹⁴⁷ Weinstein, *Sometimes People Get Lost*, 13.

¹⁴⁸ Weinstein, *Sometimes People Get Lost*, 14.

historical narratives that drew attention to their experiences with colonialism, as well as their continued resilience in the face of colonialism.

The knowledge about Indigenous land use that had been unfolding since the onset of the fur trade in Kaska lands during the 1820s was also drawn into the historical narratives around Aboriginal title. Records and publications produced during by the HBC, anthropologists, and government administrators were imbued with new significance as they were mobilized to advance the Kaska Dena's Aboriginal title. However, as the Kaska Dena continued to push for the recognition of their rights – both within the realm of land claim negotiations as well as within the emerging EIA and SIA regimes – colonial forms of knowledge began to interact with Indigenous knowledge relating to land use. Sometimes community-based Indigenous knowledge supported the information conveyed in the colonial archives, sometimes it challenged colonial knowledge. As these understandings of past land use interacted, new and increasingly complex historical narratives emerged.

CONCLUSION

Kaska Dena communities continue to be affected by colonial understandings of their land use. As none of the nations from the broader Kaska Nation have reached a comprehensive land claim agreement with the Canadian, Yukon, and British Columbian governments, the Kaska continue to hold Aboriginal title as understood in the courts.¹ Although court decisions, such as *Delgamuukw*, have recognized the importance of oral histories in demonstrating Aboriginal title, colonial representations continue to influence understandings of land use and history.² With this continued importance of colonial perceptions of Kaska Dena history and land use, it is important to understand how this knowledge was produced. Through analysing the formation of knowledge it is possible to assess its strengths and weaknesses. Outsider representation resulted in an imperfect knowledge of Kaska land use. However, these understandings were not without some degree of merit. Beginning in the 1970s, as the Kaska Dena advanced their own perceptions of history and land use, they demonstrated an ambivalent relationship with colonial knowledge. On the one hand, colonial representations provided evidence of their land use in a way that could be relatively easily understood by a colonial government and colonial legal system. However, outsiders – ranging from fur traders to anthropologists to government agents – were prone to either simplify or completely misunderstand Indigenous land use. Consequently, the Kaska Dena took opportunities to insert community-based knowledge into their efforts to have their Aboriginal title recognized. Sometimes this knowledge supported colonial representations, other times it challenged them.

¹ Christopher Alcantara, *Negotiating the Deal: Comprehensive Land Claims Agreements in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 96-97.

² For example, the Kaska Dena Council website uses Honigmann's band affiliations. See Kaska Dena Council, "Our History," *Kaska Dena Council*, <https://kaskadenacouncil.com/our-history/> (accessed 6 April 2019). Additionally, a recent court case establishing rights holders within the Kaska Nation relied to colonial records to establish Aboriginal rights-holding organizations. *Kaska Dena Council v. Yukon (Government of)*, 2019, YKSC 13.

As colonizers traversed Kaska Dena lands, they developed concepts of Indigenous land use and occupancy. Various factors influenced the knowledge emerging from these subarctic travels. Among the primary factors shaping these perceptions were the characteristics of the physical environment that the colonizers passed through, as well as their preconceived notions of human-environment relations, particularly as it related to Indigenous peoples. This combination of the physical environment and intellectual baggage shaped how colonizers wrote about Kaska Dena land use – whether it was in fur trade journals, ethnographies, or governmental administrative records.

The subarctic environment interacted with the development of transportation infrastructure to influence how and when Euro-Canadians and Euro-Americans passed through the Cassiar and Pelly regions. Transportation, in turn, affected colonizers' understandings of Indigenous peoples' cultures, societies, economies, and their associated land use and occupancy. In particular, seasonality and distance affected how people travelled through the land and how they perceived the environment and the associated Indigenous land use. While early travel through the region was largely confined to rivers and occurred during the summer months, the construction of modern transportation infrastructure – particularly the Alaska Highway – changed transportation networks and moderated the effects of winter in transportation. The Alaska Highway ushered in a period in which ethnographic fieldwork and government administration could be undertaken during the winter, despite the frozen rivers.

Colonizers did not arrive in the Canadian subarctic without a specific agenda. Colonizers arrived in the North seeking to exploit fur resources, search for mineral resources, promote big game hunting, or expand the reach of the state. These agendas, in turn, influenced how they viewed the land and its people. Commercial interests, the expansion of state administration, and even the

desire to advocate for the recognition of Indigenous land rights shaped how individuals and organizations represented the environment and Indigenous land use – past, present, and future. Colonizers' interests in the land and their concomitant perceptions of human-environment relations interacted with the constraints of the physical environment to shape their representations of Kaska Dena land use and occupancy.

Euro-American and Euro-Canadian representations of Kaska Dena land use consisted of more than outsider observations. Indigenous peoples – including the Kaska Dena and their Athapaskan neighbours – also played a role in shaping these representations. Through an autoethnographic process, Indigenous peoples communicated information about the land, their neighbours, and themselves to fur traders, anthropologists, sport hunters, and government administrators.³ However, from their first contact with Europeans during the early nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century, the Kaska Dena exercised little influence over how their culture and land use was represented to the outside world.

Kaska Dena abilities to shape outside perceptions of their land use and occupancy underwent dramatic changes during the latter half of the twentieth century. In the early 1970s, as comprehensive land claims emerged as a major social and political issue in the Canadian North, Indigenous peoples were in a position to shape discussions surrounding their historical land use and occupancy. While many earlier renderings of Kaska Dena land use served outside interests – such as commercial interests, the expansion of state administration, and the expansion of the liberal order – following the emergence of land claims negotiations, these earlier portrayals took on new significance. The Kaska Dena and other Indigenous organizations found themselves in a position

³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd edition, (London: Routledge, 2008. First edition published in 1992).

to mobilize colonial records to advance their own claims against the state. However, unlike previous instances where the representations of Kaska Dena culture, society, and land use was co-created in a context in which the likes of explorers, anthropologists, and government administrators exercised editorial control, the Kaska Dena exerted significantly greater influence over their representations during land claim negotiations. Colonial records were used to demonstrate extant Aboriginal title. However, these materials were supported, and sometimes refuted, by community-based knowledge. As colonial records were used to advance Aboriginal title, their authority as final arbiter of Kaska Dena land use and occupancy was challenged. Rather, the knowledge of community members emerged in the production of land claim reports, public testimony in public hearings regarding mega-projects, and environmental impact assessments. This knowledge challenged colonial representations of history and the historical land use of the Kaska Dena. While challenging Whiggish notions of resource development in the Canadian North, community-based knowledge also offered critical analysis of colonial representation of land use. The Kaska Dena pointed out inaccuracies in colonial representations of their land. Additionally, the Kaska Dena confirmed when colonial representations were more-or-less accurate.

Chapter 1 demonstrated how seasonality affected the travels of fur traders through the subarctic. The seasonal nature of travel, which was generally confined to the summer, in turn, affected what the fur traders observed and the information they learned about the environment and its Indigenous inhabitants. Chapter 2 described how the fixed-location nature of HBC trading posts also influenced what fur traders learned about the local environment and the Kaska. Fur traders stationed at the posts were dependent on Indigenous visitors as well as the hunters and fishers that they employed to provide them with information relating to events beyond the confines of the posts. While the perspectives from the trading posts were limited geographically when compared

to that of explorers, they reflected a deeper understanding of the immediate vicinity which included knowledge about Indigenous land use patterns during the winter.

In chapter 3, the dissertations focus shifts to the production of anthropological knowledge. This chapter highlights the effects of seasonality and transportation networks on the acquisition of anthropological knowledge. As the Kaska Dena hunting and trapping territories during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were generally only accessible to outsiders by river travel, the freeze-up of rivers during the fall inhibited travel through the territory. Consequently, early anthropological information was acquired during the summer months. With the construction of the Alaska Highway in 1942, transportation through the region was no longer limited to the summer. The highway allowed anthropologists to carry out fieldwork during the winter, which allowed them to observe and record wintertime land use activities. Moreover, the construction of the Alaska Highway also changed how Kaska Dena hunting and trapping territories were approached. While prior access to the region was primarily from the west, by ascending the Stikine River, after the highway's construction the region approached from the east. However, other regions of the Kaska Dena territories, such as the upper Pelly River, remained relatively isolated. Consequently, anthropologist John Honigmann did not venture to this region and did not consider the Indigenous peoples of this region to be Kaska.

Chapter 4 examines how historical narratives shaped outsider representations of the Kaska Dena and their land use by comparing the information produced by anthropologist James Teit to that produced by the McKenna-McBride Reserve Commission during the early twentieth century. Both Teit and the members of the reserve commission believed that the North was changing and that Indigenous culture was moribund. As a salvage anthropologist, Teit felt that the perceived loss of Indigenous culture was a development to be lamented. Consequently, he sought to gather

information pertaining to precontact culture and traditional territories. Conversely, the members of the reserve commission represented what they perceived to be the future of Kaska Dena land use, rooted in their desires to promote assimilation. While the reserve commission had provided other Indigenous peoples in British Columbia an opportunity to air their grievances against colonial practices, this situation did not materialize for the Kaska Dena. Moreover, the reserve commission's focus on future land use limited the source base which the Kaska Dena could draw upon to demonstrate historical land use and land rights.

Chapter 5 considers how state administration, and in particular, how trapline registration, shaped colonial understandings of Kaska Dena land use and land tenure systems. This chapter examines the debates that ensued between government agents from the federal Department of Indian Affairs and provincial game wardens in British Columbia regarding Indigenous trapping activities. It then focuses on the implementation of trapline registration in northern BC and the Yukon and how it led to a more rigid understanding of Kaska Dena land use and boundaries with neighbouring Indigenous groups.

Finally, chapter 6 considers the historical legacies of these colonial representations. This chapter examines Kaska Dena land claim submissions as well as their efforts to control development in their territories through their participation in environmental impact assessments. This chapter demonstrates how the Kaska Dena mobilized colonial records to advance their claims, but also how Eurocentric representations created simplified understandings of Indigenous land use. These simplified understandings were perpetuated in juridical and state understandings of Aboriginal title. As the Kaska Dena advanced their claims, they also mobilized community-based knowledge to sometimes support the colonial records and sometimes challenge them.

Understanding the historical legacies of the colonial viewpoint of Indigenous land use and occupancy provides an opportunity to understand its complex and contradictory effects. These perspectives were developed within specific historical and environmental contexts with particular interests in mind. These factors shaped colonial portrayals of Kaska Dena land uses and occupancy. While outsider understandings of Indigenous land use generally represented simplified understandings of a more complicated ground truth, these representations were not without value. Beginning in the 1970s, and continuing during the following decades, as the Kaska Dena were in a position to advance their land rights, colonial records were a way to demonstrate their Aboriginal title in a way that conformed to the expectations of the courts and federal policy makers. Colonial representation of Kaska history and land use reflected imperfect knowledge. However, the records produced in the process of forming this knowledge could be deployed to advance Aboriginal title and challenge the state. In conjunction with these colonial records, the Kaska Dena also made efforts to incorporate community-based knowledge in their efforts to articulate their land rights. As the Kaska Dena have not settled land claims, these historical understandings of land use continue to shape their abilities to articulate Aboriginal title within the confines of the current legal framework.

This dissertation showcases the need to reconsider uncritical uses of colonial knowledge with respect to the Kaska. By carefully examining the construction of knowledge relating to the Kaska, it is possible to see the cracks in colonial knowledge and the more complicated relationships existing below these simplifications. This dissertation shows how the Kaska were both seen and unseen (or misperceived) by the state. Finally, it demonstrates that with the emergence of comprehensive land claim negotiations, the Kaska were resilient in defending their

own concepts of history and land use, while simultaneously using colonial records when necessary.

In Canada, many Indigenous groups do not have a settled land claim agreement. Consequently, they still have unextinguished Aboriginal title. However, the proof of this title depends on historical understandings of land use and occupancy. While the courts now recognize oral testimony as a means of demonstrating Aboriginal title, it is still important to recognize the historical legacies of colonial knowledge and the ways in which legal understandings of Aboriginal title circumscribes Indigenous land rights. Circumstances will be different between the experiences of different Indigenous groups. This dissertation focuses on a specific situation which was affected by various aspects of the subarctic environment as well as an internal border. But there are lessons to be drawn for considering the histories of other Indigenous groups. It is important to consider the specific historical circumstances surrounding knowledge production. What factors contributed to what we think we know about a specific Indigenous group? Additionally, it is essential to consider how contemporary understandings of Aboriginal title might contribute to perpetuating colonial constructions as well as how it might challenge colonial knowledge. Finally, this work demonstrates the value of colonial knowledge as an imperfect, but not inconsequential, form of knowledge.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Archival Sources

British Columbia Archives

- British Columbia, Fish and Wildlife Branch (GR-1085).
- British Columbia, Provincial Game Warden (GR-0466).
- British Columbia, Provincial Museum, Wilson Duff Papers (GR-2809).

Canadian Museum of History Archives (Gatineau, Quebec)

- Edward Sapir fonds.
- James Teit fonds.

Hudson's Bay Company Archives (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

- Fort Halkett post journals.
- Fort Simpson (Mackenzie River) post journals.
- Frances Lake Post journals.

Library and Archives Canada (Ottawa, Ontario)

- Geological Survey of Canada Records (RG45).
- Indian Affairs Records (RG10).
- James Ross Fulton fonds.
- Robert Campbell fonds.
- Willard Ferdinand Wentzel fonds.

McGill University Archives (Montreal, Quebec)

- George Mercer Dawson fonds.

Smithsonian Institute, National Anthropological Archives (Suitland, Maryland)

- John Joseph Honigmann Papers.

Yukon Archives (Whitehorse, Yukon)

- Anton Money fonds.
- Poole Filed fonds.
- Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 1.
- Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 3.
- Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Series 9.
- Records of the Yukon Government, YRG1, Records Office Files, Series 1.
- Tom and Shirley Connolly fonds.

Printed Primary Sources

- Allard, E. "Notes on the Kaska and Upper Liard Indians." In *Primitive Man* 2, no. 1 (1929): 24-26.

- BC Hydro. Generation Planning Department. System Engineering Division. *Liard River Hydroelectric Development: Outline of Proposed Engineering Site Investigations, 1982 to 1987*. Vancouver: BC Hydro, Community Relations Department, May 1982.
- BC Hydro. *Liard River Hydroelectric Studies: Information Bulletin No. 3*. B.C. Hydro, March 1981.
- Berger, Thomas. *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland: The Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry: Volume One*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1977.
- Black, Samuel. *A Journal of a Voyage From Rocky Mountain Portage in Peace River to the Sources of Finlays Branch And North West Ward In Summer 1824*. Ed., E.E. Rich. London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1955.
- Campbell, Robert. *Robert Campbell's Fur Trade Journals, 1808 to 1853*. Ed., John W. Todd, Jr. Seattle, Washington: 1958.
- Canada. *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Ross River, YT, 10 June 1977*, vol. 21. Burnaby, BC: Allwest Reporting Ltd., 1977.
- Canada. *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry: Proceedings: Upper Liard, YT, 7 June 1977* vol. 18. Burnaby, BC: Allwest Reporting Ltd., 1977.
- Canada. Indian Affairs and Northern Development. *In All Fairness: A Native Policy: Comprehensive Claims*. Ottawa: Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1981.
- Canada. Indian Affairs. *Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia*, Vol. IV. Victoria: Acme Press Limited, 1916.
- Canada. Indian Affairs. *Dominion of Canada Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1912*. Ottawa, Ontario, 1912.
- Canadian Resourcecon Limited. Lloyd, Tate and Associates. Bentley Le Baron. *NCPC Yukon Hydroelectric Investigations: Socio-Economic and Land Use Study, Volume I, Socio-Economics (Draft)*. Edmonton: Northern Canada Power Commission, April 1982.
- Council for Yukon Indians and Kaska-Dena Council. "The Overlapping Claims: A Critique of Federal Policy." 9 June 1983.
- Dawson, George Mercer. *Report of an exploration in the Yukon district, N.W.T., and adjacent northern portion of British Columbia, 1887*. Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1888.
- De Brou, Dave, and Bill Waiser, eds. *Documenting Canada: A History of Modern Canada in Documents*. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992.

- Elias, Peter Douglas. *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in British Columbia*. Kaska Dena Council, 31 January 1986.
- Elias, Peter Douglas. *Kaska Dena Land Use and Occupancy in the Yukon*. Kaska Dena Council, 18 May 1985.
- Field, Poole. "The Poole Field Letters (1913)." Ed., J.H. MacNeish. *Anthropologica* 4 (1957): 39-171.
- Honigmann, John Joseph *The Kaska Indians: An Ethnographic Reconstruction*. Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 51. New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1954.
- Honigmann, John J. *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946.
- Honigmann, J.J. "On the Alaska Highway." *Dalhousie Review* (January 1944): [pages](#).
- Kaska Dena Council. *Aboriginal Claim and Territory of the Kaska Dena*. Watson Lake, Yukon: Kaska Dena Council, Research Division, 1985.
- Kaska Dena Council. *Kaska Dena Council's Land Claim Submission*. Watson Lake: Kaska Dena Council, February 1982.
- Lysyk, Kenneth M., Edith E. Bohmer, and Willard L. Phelps, *Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry*, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1977.
- Meek, R.J. "Report Yukon Indian Agency: A survey of conditions of the Indians of Northern B.C., and the Yukon Territory, for the Department of Anthropology, University of British Columbia." 1 March 1955.
- Money, Anton, with Ben East. *This Was the North*. Toronto: General Publishing Co. Limited, 1975.
- Nielsen, Erik. *The House Is Not a Home*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1989.
- Patterson, R.M. *The Dangerous River: Adventure on the Nahanni*. Victoria: Touchwood Editions, 2009.
- Pike, Warburton. *Through the Subarctic Forest: A Record of a Canoe Journey from Fort Wrangel to the Pelly Lakes and Down the Yukon River to the Behring Sea*. London: Edward Arnold, 1996.
- Ross River Dena Council. *Dene Dechen Tah Néde' (Living in the Bush): Traditional Lifestyles of the Kaska and Mountain Slavey People of Ross River*. A Resource Reader Produced for the Ross River Dena Council, 1992.

Sheldon, Charles. *The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon: A Hunter's Explorations for Wild Sheep in Sub-Arctic Mountains*. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1911.

Teit, J.A. "Field Notes on the Tahltan and Kaska Indians: 1912-15," *Anthropologica* (1956): 39-171.

Teit, James A. "Kaska Tales." *Journal of American Folklore* 30, no. 118 (1917): 427-473.

Weinstein, Martin S. *Just Like People Get Lost: A Retrospective Assessment of the Impacts of the Faro Mining Development the Land Use of the Ross River Indian People*. Ross River: A Report to the Ross River Dena Council, 1992.

Yukon Native Brotherhood. *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. Whitehorse: Yukon Native Brotherhood, 1973.

Secondary Sources

Adlam, Robert G. "The Northern Athabaskan Survey of Edward Sapir and James A. Teit." *Anthropological Linguistics* 49, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 99-117.

Alcantara, Christopher. *Negotiating the Deal: Comprehensive Land Claims Agreements in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013.

Amselle, Jean-Loup. *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere*. Trans., Claudia Royal. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, originally published in 1990.

Arndt, Katherine L. "Russian Relations with the Stikine Tlingit, 1833-1867." *Alaska History* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 27-43.

Basso, Keith H. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996.

BC Treaty Commission. "Statement of Intent: Traditional Boundary Map: Kaska Dena Council." *BC Treaty Commission*.
http://www.bctreaty.ca/sites/default/files/Kaska_Dena_Council_SOI_Map.pdf Accessed 31 October 2018.

Bell, Catherine, and Michael Asch. "Challenging Assumptions: The Impact of Precedent in Aboriginal Rights Litigation." In *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equality, and Respect for Difference*. Ed., Michael Asch. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997. 38-74.

Binnema, Ted. "Protecting Indian Lands by Defining Indian: 1850-76." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 5-39.

- Black-Rogers, Mary. "Varieties of 'Starving': Semantics and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade, 1750-1850." *Ethnohistory* 33, no. 4 (Autumn 1986): 353-383.
- Borrows, John. *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.
- Brody, Hugh. *The Other Side of Eden: Hunters, Farmers and the Shaping of the World*. Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000.
- Brody, Hugh. *Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier*. Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1981.
- Cameron, Emilie. *Far Off Metal River: Inuit Lands, Settler Stories, and the Making of the Contemporary Arctic*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015.
- Campbell, Peter. "'Not as a White Man, Not as a Sojourner': James A. Teit and the Fight for Native Rights in British Columbia, 1884-1922." *Left History* 2, no. 2 (1994): 37-57.
- Canada. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. *Building the Future: Yukon First Nation Self-Government*. <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1316214942825/1316215019710> Accessed 31 October 2018.
- Canada. "Remediating Faro Mine in the Yukon." <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1480019546952/1537554989037> 14 December 2018. Accessed 8 July 2019.
- Carlson, Hans M. *Home is the Hunter: The James Bay Cree and Their Land*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008.
- Carlson, Keith Thor. *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.
- Cassidy, Frank. "Aboriginal Land Claims in British Columbia." In *Aboriginal Land Claims in Canada: A Regional Perspective*. Ed., Ken Coates. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, Ltd., 1992. 11-43.
- Catton, Theodore. *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos, and National Parks in Alaska*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.
- Coates, Kenneth. "The Sinews of Their Lives: First Nations Access to Resources in the Yukon, 1890-1950." In *The Culture of Hunting in Canada*. Eds., Jean L. Manore and Dale G. Minor. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007. 148-166.
- Coates, Ken S. *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991.

- Coates, Kenneth. "The Alaska Highway and the Indians of the Southern Yukon, 1942-50: A Study of Native Adaptation to Northern Development." In *The Alaska Highway: Papers of the 40th Anniversary Symposium*. Ed., Kenneth Coates. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1985. 151-171.
- Coates, Ken. "Furs Along the Yukon: Hudson's Bay Company-Native Trade in the Yukon River Basin, 1840-1893." *BC Studies* 55 (Autumn 1982): 50-78.
- Coates, Kenneth, ed., *The Alaska Highway: Papers of the 40th Anniversary Symposium*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985.
- Coates, Ken S., and William R. Morrison. "Winter and the Shaping of Northern History: Reflections from the Canadian North." In *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History*. Eds., Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates. Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 2001. 23-35.
- Coates, K.S., and W.R. Morrison. *The Alaska Highway in World War II: The U.S. Army of Occupation in Canada's Northwest*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.
- Coates, Kenneth, and Judith Powell. *The Modern North: People, Politics and the Rejection of Colonialism*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, Publishers, 1989.
- Coates, Peter. "Borderland, No-Man's Land, Nature's Wonderland: Troubled Humanity and Untroubled Earth." *Environment and History* 20, no. 4 (November 2014): 499-516.
- Colpitts, George. "'Victuals to Put into our Mouths': Environmental Perspectives on Fur Trade Provisioning Activities at Cumberland House, 1775-1782." In *The Early Northwest*. Ed., Gregory P. Marchildon. Regina: University of Regina Press, Canadian Plains Research Center, 2008. 125-146.
- Cronon, William. "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative." *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (March 1992): 1347-1376.
- Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1983.
- Crosby, Alfred W. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Crosby, Alfred W. "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America." *William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (April 1976): 289-299.
- Crosby, Alfred. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1972.

- Cruikshank, Julie. *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005.
- Cruikshank, Julie, in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned. *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990.
- Cruikshank, Julie. "The Gravel Magnet: Some Social Impacts of the Alaska Highway on Yukon Indians." In *The Alaska Highway: Papers of the 40th Anniversary Symposium*. Ed., Kenneth Coates. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1985. 188-204.
- Cruikshank, Julie. *Through the Eyes of Strangers: A Preliminary Survey of Land Use History in the Yukon During the Late Nineteenth Century*. Whitehorse: Yukon Territorial Government and Yukon Archives, 1974.
- den Otter, A.A. *Civilizing the Wilderness: Culture and Nature in Pre-Confederation Canada and Rupert's Land*. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2012.
- Desbiens, Caroline. *Power from the North: Territory, Identity, and the Culture of Hydroelectricity in Quebec*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013.
- Dick, Lyle. "The Seven Oaks Incident and the construction of a Historical Tradition, 1816 to 1970." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 2, no. 1 (1991): 91-113.
- Dimitrov, Peter Petrov. "A Northern Indian Band's Mode of Production and its Articulation with the Multinational Mode." Msc. Thesis, University of British Columbia, October 1984.
- Duff, Wilson. *The Indian History of British Columbia: The Impact of the White Man*, New Edition. Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1997.
- Easton, N. Alexander. "Introduction: The 1987 Centenary Edition." In George Mercer Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District, N.W.T. and Adjacent Northern Portion of British Columbia, 1887*. Whitehorse, Yukon: Yukon Historical & Museums Association, 1987.
- Farnell, Gillian. "The Kaska Dene: A Study of Colonialism, Trauma and Healing in Dene Kēyeh." MA Thesis: University of British Columbia, 2014.
- Fisk, Jo-Anne, and Betty Patrick. *Cis Dideen Kat (When the Plumes Rise): The Way of the Lake Babine Nation*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000.
- Fladmark, K.R. "Early Fur-trade Posts of the Peace River Area of British Columbia." *BC Studies* 65 (Spring 1985): 48-65.
- Foster, Hamar. "We Are Not O'Meara's Children: Law, Lawyers, and the First Campaign for Aboriginal Title in British Columbia." In *Let Right Be Done: Aboriginal Title, the Calder*

- Case, and the Future of Indigenous Rights*. Eds., Hamar Foster, Heather Raven, and Jeremy Webber. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007. 61-84.
- Foster, Hamar, Heather Raven, and Jeremy Webber, eds. *Let Right be Done: Aboriginal Title, the Calder Case, and the Future of Indigenous Rights*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007.
- Frogner, Raymond. "'Innocent Legal Fictions': Archival Convention and the *North Saanich Treaty* of 1852." *Archivaria* 70 (Fall 2010): 45-94.
- Fumoleau, René. *As Long as This Land Shall Last: A History of Treaty 8 and Treaty 11, 1870-1939*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004.
- Gingell, Susan. "The Social Lives of Sedan and Sky Woman: Print Textualization from Inuit and Mohawk Oral Traditions." In *Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines*. Eds. Keith Thor Carlson, Kristina Fagan, and Natalia Khanenko-Friesen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011. 110-150.
- Gotthardt, R. *Frances Lake: Traditional and Archaeological Sites*. Watson Lake: Liard First Nation, 1993.
- Gordon, Todd, and Jeffery R. Webber. "Imperialism and Resistance: Canadian Mining Companies in Latin America." *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2008): 63-87.
- Gough, Barry. *Fortunes a River: The Collision of Empires in Northwest America*. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2007.
- Greer, Allan. "Commons and Enclosure in the Colonization of North America." *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 2 (April 2012): 365-385.
- Grinev, Andrei Val'terovich. *The Tlingit Indians in Russian America, 1741-1867*. Trans., Richard L. Bland and Katerina G. Solovjova. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.
- Gulik, John, June Helm, James L. Peacock, and Richard H. Robbins. "John Joseph Honigmann, 1914-1977." *American Anthropologist* 80, no. 3 (September 1978): 630.
- Hamilton, John David. *Arctic Revolution: Social Change in the Northwest Territories, 1935-1994*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994.
- Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science* 162 (1968): 1243-1248.
- Harris, Cole. *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002.
- Harris, Douglas C. "A Court Between: Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in the British Columbia Court of Appeal." *BC Studies* 162 (Summer 2009): 137-164.

- Harris, Douglas C. *Landing Native Fisheries: Indian Reserves & Fishing Rights in British Columbia, 1849-1925*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008.
- Hodgins, Bruce W. "Aboriginal Peoples and Their Historic Right to Hunt: A Reasonable Symbiotic Relationship." In *The Culture of Hunting in Canada*. Eds., Jean L. Manore and Dale G. Miner. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007. 193-204.
- Honigmann, John J. "Are There Nahani Indians." *Anthropologica* 3 (1956): 35-37.
- Innis, Harold A. *The Fur trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian and Economic History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999 (originally published, 1930).
- Ireland, Brenda. "'Working a Great Hardship on Us': First Nations People, the State, and Furbearer Conservation in British Columbia Prior to 1930." *Native Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (1996): 65-90.
- Isaac, Thomas. *Aboriginal Law: Commentary, Cases and Materials*, Third Edition. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd., 2004.
- Johnson, Leslie Main. *Trail of Story, Traveller's Path: Reflections on Ethnoecology and Landscape*. Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010.
- Johnson, Miranda. *The Land is Our History: Indigeneity, Law, and the Settler State*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Karamanski, Theodore J. *Fur Trade and Exploration: Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983.
- Kaska Dena Council. *Kaska Dena Council*. <https://kaskadenacouncil.com/interactive-timeline/> Accessed 31 October 2018.
- Keeling, Arn, and John Sandlos. "Environmental Justice Goes Underground? Historical Notes from Canada's Northern Mining Frontier." *Environmental Justice* 2, no. 3 (2009): 117-125.
- Knafla, Louis A. "'This Is Our Land': Aboriginal Title in Customary and Common Law in Comparative Contexts." In *Aboriginal Title and Indigenous Peoples: Canada, Australia, and New Zealand*. Eds., Louis A. Knafla and Haijo Westra. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010. 1-34.
- Krech, Shepard, III. *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.
- Krech, Shepard, III, "The Beaver Indians and the Hostilities at Fort St. John's." *Arctic Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (1983): 35-45.

- Lamers, Frans Anton. "Are the Kaska and Slave Aboriginal? An Ecological and Ethnohistorical Study." MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University, December 1974.
- Loo, Tina. "Disturbing the Peace: Environmental Change and the Scales of Justice on a Northern River." *Environmental History* 12, no. 4 (October 2007): 895-919.
- Loo, Tina. "Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in British Columbia, 1880-1939." *Western Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 296-319.
- Loo, Tina, and Meg Stanley. "An Environmental History of Progress: Damming the Peace and Columbia Rivers." *The Canadian Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (September 2011): 399-427.
- Lutz, John Sutton. *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008.
- Macpherson, Janet E. "The Cyprus Anvil Mine." In *Northern Transitions*, Vol. I, *Northern Resource and Land Use Policy Study*. Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, 1978. 111-149.
- Martin, Brad. "Negotiating a Partnership of Interests: Inuvialuit Land Claims and the Establishment of Northern Yukon (Ivvavik) National Park." In *A Century of Parks Canada: 1911-2011*. Ed., Claire Elizabeth Campbell. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011. 273-301.
- Matsui, Kenichi. *Native Peoples and Water Rights: Irrigation, Dams, and the Law in Western Canada*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2009.
- McCandless, Robert G. *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History*. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1985.
- McCandless, Robert. "Trophies or Meat: Yukon Game Management, 1898-1976." Unpublished manuscript, 7 January 1977.
- McClellan, Catharine. *My Old People Say: An Ethnographic Survey of Southern Yukon Territory*, Vol. 1. Publications in Ethnography, No. 6(1). Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1975.
- McIlwraith, Thomas, and Raymond Cormier. "Making Place for Space: Land Use and Occupancy Studies, Counter-Mapping, and the Supreme Court of Canada's *Tsilhqot'in* Decision." *BC Studies* no. 188 (Winter 2015/16): 35-53.
- McKay, Ian. "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History." *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (December 2000): 617-645.

- McKee, Christopher. *Treaty Talks in British Columbia: Building a New Relationship*, 3rd Edition. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009.
- McNeil, Kent. "The Meaning of Aboriginal Title." In *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equality, and Respect for Difference*. Ed., Michael Asch. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997. 135-154.
- McNeil, Kent. *Common Law Aboriginal Title*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Meek, Barbara A. *We Are Our Language: An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athapaskan Community*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2010.
- Melville, Elinor G.K. *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Miller, Bruce Granville. *Oral History on Trial: Recognizing Aboriginal Narratives in the Courts*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011.
- Moore, Patrick. "The Contemporary Significance of Native Language Texts: Arthur John, Sr.'s Account of John Martin and the Kaska Stick Gamblers." In *Transforming Ethnohistories: Narrative, Meaning, and Community*. Ed., Sebastian Felix Braun. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013. 113-146
- Moore, Patrick. "Negotiated Identities: The Evolution of Dene Tha and Kaska Personal Naming Systems." *Anthropological Linguistics* 49, no. 3/4 (Fall-Winter 2007): 283-307.
- Moore, Patrick. "Poking Fun: Humour and Power in Kaska Contact Narratives." In *Myth & Memory: Stories of Indigenous-European Contact*. Ed., John Sutton Lutz. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007. 69-89.
- Moore, Patrick James. "Point of View in Kaska Historical Narratives." PhD. Dissertation, Indiana University, December 2002.
- Moore, Patrick, ed. *Dene Gudeji: Kaska Narratives*. Whitehorse, Yukon: Kaska Tribal Council, 1999.
- Morrison, William R. "The Comprehensive Claims Process in Canada's North: New Rhetoric, Old Policies." In *For the Purposes of Dominion: Essays in Honour of Morris Zaslow*. Eds., Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison. North York, Ontario: Captus University Publications, 1989.
- Morse, Kathryn. *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003.
- Nadasdy, Paul. "Imposing Territoriality: First Nation Land Claims and the Transformation of Human-Environment Relations in the Yukon." In *Ice Blink: Navigating Northern*

- Environmental History*. Eds., Stephen Bocking and Brad Martin. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2017. 333-376.
- Nadasdy, Paul. "Boundaries among Kin: Sovereignty, the Modern Treaty Process, and the Rise of Ethno-Territorial Nationalism among Yukon First Nation." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012): 499-532.
- Nadasdy, Paul. *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003.
- Nadasdy, Paul. "'Property' and Aboriginal Land Claims in the Canadian Subarctic: Some Theoretical Considerations." *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 104, no. 1 (March 2002): 247-261.
- Neufeld, David. "Kluane National Park Reserve, 1923-1974: Modernity and Pluralism." In *A Century of Parks Canada: 1911-2011*. Ed., Claire Elizabeth Campbell. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011. 235-272.
- Noble, Brian F. *Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment: A Guide to Principles and Practices*, 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Penikett, Tony. *Reconciliation: First Nations Treaty Making in British Columbia*. Vancouver/Toronto/Berkeley: Douglas & McIntyre, 2006.
- Peyton, Jonathan. *Unbuilt Environments: Tracing Postwar Development in Northwest British Columbia*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017.
- Peyton, Jonathan. "Imbricated Geographies of Conservation and Consumption in the Stikine Plateau." *Environment and History* 17, no. 4 (November 2011): 555-581.
- Piper, Liza. "Innis, Biss, and Industrial Circuitry in the Canadian North, 1921-1965." In *Harold Innis and the North: Appraisals and Contestations*. Ed. William J. Buxton. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013. 127-148.
- Piper, Liza. *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009.
- Piper, Liza, and John Sandlos. "A Broken Frontier: Ecological Imperialism in the Canadian North." *Environmental History* 12, no. 4 (October 2007): 759-795.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2008. First edition published in 1992.
- Raibmon, Paige. *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth Century Northwest Coast*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

- Ray, Arthur J. "Fur Trade History and the Gitksan-Wet'suset'en Comprehensive Claim: Men of Property and the Exercise of Title." In *Aboriginal Resource Use in Canada: Historical and Legal Aspects*. Eds., Kerry Abel and Jean Friesen. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1991. 301-315.
- Reedy-Maschner, Katherine L., and Herbert D.G. Maschner. "Marauding Middlemen: Western Expansion and Violent Conflict in the Subarctic." *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 4 (Autumn 1999): 703-743.
- Ross, Ken. *Pioneering Conservation in Alaska*. Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2006.
- Rueck, Daniel. "Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance in Kahnawá:ke Mohawk Territory, 1850-1900." *Canadian Historical Review* 95, no. 3 (September 2014): 352-381.
- Sabin, Paul. "Voices from the Hydrocarbon Frontier: Canada's Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (1974-1977)." *Environmental History Review* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 17-48.
- Sandlos, John. *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007.
- Sandlos, John, and Arn Keeling. "Claiming the New North: Development and Colonialism at the Pine Point Mine, Northwest Territories, Canada." *Environmental History* 18 (2012): 5-34.
- Sandlos, John, and Arn Keeling. "Aboriginal Communities, Traditional Knowledge, and the Environmental Legacies of Extractive Development in Canada." *The Extractive Industries and Society* 3, no. 2 (April 2016): 278-287.
- Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- St-Onge, Nicole. "'He was neither a soldier nor a slave: he was under the control of no man': Kahnawake Mohawks in the Northwest Fur Trade, 1790-1830." *Canadian Journal of History* 52, no. 1 (2016): 1-32.
- Tennant, Paul. *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990.
- Thom, Brian. "The Paradox of Boundaries in Coast Salish Territories." *Cultural Geographies* 16 (2009): 179-205.
- Thompson, Judy. *Recording Their Story: James Teit and the Tahltan*. Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007.
- Thornton, Thomas F. *Being and Place Among the Tlingit*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008.

- Thorpe, Jocelyn. *Temagami's Tangled Wild: Race, Gender, and the Making of Canada's Nature*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012.
- Tompkins, Heather. "Historical Climatology of the Southern Yukon: Paleoclimatic Reconstruction using Documentary Sources from 1842-1852." MS Thesis, Queen's University, 2006.
- Turkel, William J. *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007.
- Vogt, David. "'Indians on White Lines': Bureaucracy, Race, and Power on Northern British Columbian Traplines, 1925-1950." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, New Series, 26, no 1 (2015): 163-190.
- Voss, Jennifer. *Stikine River: A Guide to Paddling the Great River*, (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 1998.
- Waiser, Bill. *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905*, (Markham: Fifth House, 2016.
- Waiser, Bill. "A Very Long Journey: Distance and Northern History." In *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History*. Eds., Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001. 37-44.
- White, Richard. *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980.
- Wickwire, Wendy. "'We Shall Drink from the Stream and So Shall You': James A. Teit and Native Resistance in British Columbia, 1908-22." *Canadian Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (1998): 199-236.
- Wilson, Clifford. *Campbell of the Yukon*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada.
- Yerbury, J.C. *The Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade, 1680-1860*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986.
- Yerbury, J.C. "The Nahanny Indians and the Fur Trade: 1800-1840." *The Musk-Ox* 28 (1981): 43-57.
- Zaslow, Morris. *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914-1967*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988.
- Zaslow, Morris. *Reading the Rocks: The Story of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1842-1972*. Toronto/Ottawa: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited in association with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and Information Canada, 1975.